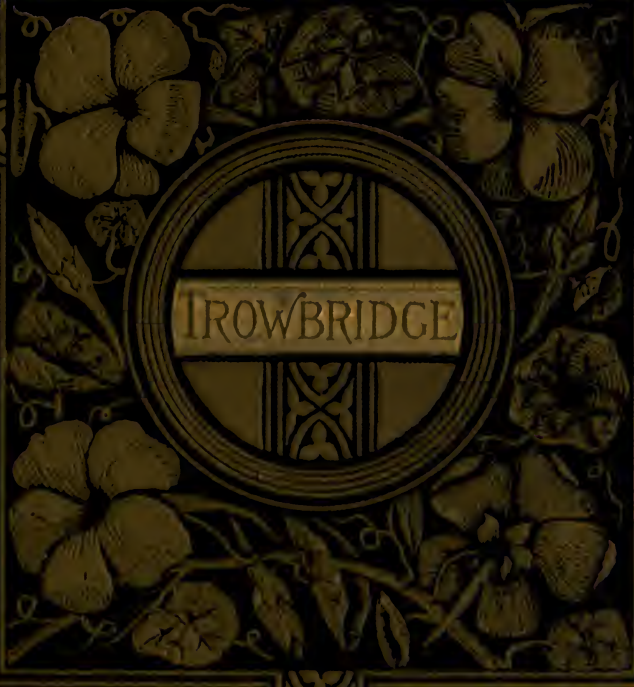




PHIL AND HIS FRIENDS



TROWBRIDGE

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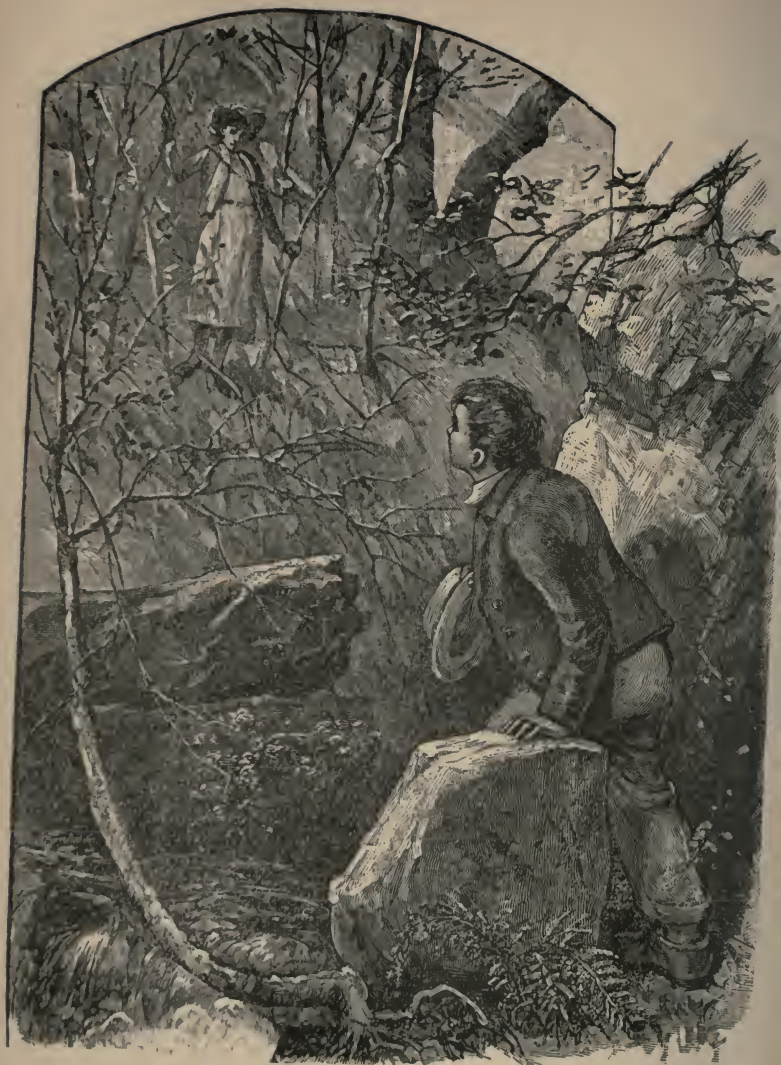
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BOUND IN HONOR.
THE POCKET RIFLE.
THE JOLLY ROVER.
PHIL AND HIS FRIENDS.
THE TINKHAM BROTHERS' TIDE MILL.

All handsomely illustrated.

LEE AND SHEPARD, Publishers, Boston.



"That Salbe was in search of him he could not doubt" [p. 42].

PHIL AND HIS FRIENDS

BY

J. T. TROWBRIDGE

ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON

LEE AND SHEPARD, 47 FRANKLIN STREET

NEW YORK

CHARLES T. DILLINGHAM, 678 BROADWAY

1884

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PHIL AND HIS FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

HIS FATHER'S DEBTS.

PHILIP FARLOW was trudging along the village street, bearing a fish-pole and a dozen fine trout on a forked stick.

The sun had just set behind the wooded hills, the distant mountain peaks were putting on their loveliest hues, and the soaring summit of Old Blue was wondrously mantled with purple and gold.

The fall crickets were singing,—for it was late summer,—and the chasm beneath Thunder Brook bridge was filled with the solitary plashy roar of the torrent as he passed over.

Phil was happy: he had brought home something beside his string of fish from the gorges and streams,—the wild life of the woods, the fresh odors, the beauty of the shadowed rocks and of the leaping waters.

He had never known much of country life until his father brought him that summer to the village nestled there among the spurs of the White Hills. He had hardly even known happiness before, at least since his mother died, two years ago.

His unthrifty father was always getting into debt and flitting from place to place, pursued by troubles which seemed to harass far less the man of forty than they did the boy of fourteen.

For four or five weeks now those troubles had nearly ceased. Coming to a new field, where his character was unknown, Mr. Farlow's gay manners and liberal promises had gained him credit and friends; and Phil's uneasy thoughts of the future were lulled to rest. They were destined to be rudely jostled, however, very soon.

He had crossed the bridge, and a turn of the street had brought him opposite a variety store on the other side, from the door of which the proprietor called out to him, —

“Where did ye git *them*?”

“In the pools up in the woods,” replied Phil, proudly.

“Ketch 'em with flies?”

“Some with flies and some with worms.” And the boy held up his string of trout to be gazed at.

"Wal, ye done well! One or two half-pounders amongst 'em, ain't they?" said the man, still talking across the street.

Phil thought the largest of them might turn the scales at that figure.

"That pole and tackle's ben doin' on ye good service," the storekeeper continued, with a genial smile. "Glad on 't; which reminds me, by the way, your pop's never been in and settled for 'em, as he promised to,—for them and some other things,—that chip hat you've got on, for instance."

Poor Phil lowered the fish he was holding up so proudly, and shrank back into himself with a frightened look and gasp.

"Hasn't he? I thought, Mr. Minkins—" he began, almost ready to lie in order to excuse his father.

"No, he hain't," said Mr. Minkins. "Why don't he come this way no more lately?"

"I—I don't know," faltered Phil, although he could guess well enough.

"Wal, jest remind your pop, will ye?"

"Yes, sir," Phil meekly replied, as he turned to walk on, glancing timidly around to see who had overheard this unpleasant conversation.

Drigson, the tailor, had overheard it, for one. He sat cross-legged on the counter by his open shop-

window, near which he had drawn his work in order to make the most of the waning daylight, and out of which he now thrust his little bald head.

"Ha! That's a perty mess of trout you've got," he said, with a skinny smile. "Le' me see."

Phil was no longer in a mood for exhibiting his trophies; he paused, nevertheless, and swung them around in full view of the sallow old man.

"Perty good! perty good! You had the luck to hook the good-sized ones."

"I flung back the little ones," Phil explained.

"That's right! that's right! Some of you summer boarders go out and fetch home strings of little bits of fellers no bigger'n your finger, that it's a perfect shame to see took out of the water: no wonder trout is growing skurce. I used to bait a hook occasionally myself, when a man could get a good mess for breakfast without tramping miles for 'em; but that has n't been of late years. Has your father left town?"

"No, sir." And Phil moved on, in dread of what was coming next.

"I ain't seen nor heard from him lately," the tailor continued, still leaning his head out of the window, with his elbows on the sill, and raising his voice as the distance between him and Phil increased. Lest

he should be growing too loud, the sensitive boy thought it best to stop again. "I sent him my bill, and the last time he went by I spoke to him about it; and I've been to see him two or three times, but I've got nothing but pleasant words from him; which I must say," added the tailor, with a sweet grimace, "he is by all odds the pleasantest man I ever measured for a suit o' clo'es. If, only," — here the grimace turned somewhat sour, — "if he was a leetle mite more prompt in paying an honest man's bill."

"I'm sorry — I — I'm sure," said Phil, in deep distress, trying to get away.

"I'm sure you are. And see here, my good little boy," cried the tailor, with a fawning, persuasive simper, lowering his voice, "get the money from your father and bring it to me, and I'll make you a handsome present out on 't."

"I'll bring it to you without taking any present, if I can," Phil replied, as he finally moved on.

He had not gone far when a rattling buggy drew up beside him, and an old gentleman put out his head from under the black top.

"Whenever you catch more fish than you know what to do with, you may bring 'em to me," he said, with humorous gravity.

"Yes, sir; thank you," stammered the boy.

"Are you pretty well now?"

The old gentleman often asked Phil that question in a friendly, half-professional way. He was the village doctor, and he had brought him safely out of a fit of sickness when the Farlows first came to town.

"I am well now," Phil answered. "I wish you would take *these*," offering the trout, with a sudden recollection of his indebtedness.

"I'm obliged to you, Phil," said the doctor, with a smile. "I won't take your fish. But there's one thing *you* must learn to take, — a joke. Did you hand your father that bill the other day?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why don't he pay it?"

"I don't know. I wish he would — I wish he could — pay you," said Phil, ready to whimper with shame and grief.

The doctor regarded him with curiosity and sympathy.

"I know you wish it: you're an honest boy. I'd rather lose the bill than hurt your feelings. Keep well and keep honest, Philip. Good day."

The kind face disappeared under the black top, and the buggy rattled on.

CHAPTER II.

FATHER AND SON.

MR. FARLOW boarded with his son at the village tavern. Solomon Bass was the landlord, and Sallie Bass, aged sixteen, was his only child.

Sallie had front teeth too large for her mouth (though her mouth was by no means small), curly red hair, cut short like a boy's, and freckles. People used to say that a witch met her as she was coming into the world and threw bran in her face. People used also to say they wondered her face did n't ache: she was so homely.

But she was a good friend to Phil; and you might often have seen them playing together like two boys. *Tomboy*, the neighbors called her.

She did n't care; she liked being a tomboy, and was never happier than when hunting hens' eggs or going a-berrying or a-fishing with Master Phil.

She ran out to meet him as he approached the old-fashioned tavern — which, within a year or two,

had grown smart with a new coat of paint and the title of *hotel*—and accompanied him into the yard.

“O Phil!” she cried, “it’s too mean for anything I could n’t go with you this afternoon! But I had to do that awful writing for pa.”

“Where’s my father?” said Phil, gloomy and agitated.

“I guess he’s around somewheres,” Sallie replied. “How funny he is lately! When anybody comes he don’t want to see, he slips out the back way and hides in the barn.”

“Does he?” said Phil, bitterly. “Who is wanting him?”

“Folks he owes money to, I guess,” said Sallie. “The washerwoman has been after him two or three times to-day. Has n’t he really got anything to pay with? Pa’s getting dreadfully worked up about it; and I’ll tell you something, if you won’t tell.”

“What is it?” Phil asked, as they passed under the shed, where he threw down his string of fish on a bench.

“One thing I had to do to-day was to make out his bill, and it’s an awful long one. Pa says it must be paid now. I hope there won’t be any trouble about it; if there is, it won’t be my fault, Phil.”

"I know that." Phil choked a little and went on. "I don't see what we're going to do."

"What makes you care?" Sallie inquired, with wondering kindness. "It ain't your fault, neither. I would n't mind, — but ain't he a strange man, though? He may not be to blame for having no money, but then he need n't take so many rides and smoke so many cigars he can't pay for. That 's what pa says."

"He never paid for this fish-pole; and I wish I had never seen it!" said Phil, throwing it down spitefully, and looking as if he was about to cry. "And that new suit of his, — he could have got along without a new suit. And the doctor, — I wish they had let me die before they ever called him in. We shall have to leave here, — I see it all, — and begin our old miserable life over again."

"How was that, for mercy's sake, Phil?" said Sallie.

"I can't tell. It was what killed my mother. I'll see him," said Phil, with sudden resolution, "and say to him what I've never dared to say yet, — I'll say it, though he *is* my father!"

He found the elder Farlow walking leisurely to and fro in the large corner room they occupied, — the best in the house, — smoking a cigar. The boy's

heart beat so fast at the thought of what he had come to say that he could not find breath to say it ; and, with a sick look, he sank down on a chair.

“ I was waiting for you, Phil,” said the man, without pausing in his walk. “ I want you to get your things quietly together, ready to leave here in the morning.”

“ Are we going ? ” Phil asked, in consternation.

“ Rather ! ” replied his father, with a heartless laugh. “ There are indications that I have outlived my usefulness here. That abject creature, the landlord, glowers upon me in a way no gentleman can put up with.”

He turned to look at himself in the glass. It was a full, amiable, dissipated face he saw there, and a stocky form jauntily dressed. He arranged his necktie and smoothed his rough chin.

“ I have n't had a shave for three days. That barber is a rascal. He seems to think I'm a mint of money. He has been after me this afternoon, considerably sharper than his best razor.”

“ Can't a man shave himself ? ” Phil tremblingly inquired.

“ Course he can, if he chooses. Why ? ”

“ I should think he would always choose, when he has n't money to pay a barber.”

Mr. Farlow turned suddenly and looked at the boy, surprised at his audacity.

“You should think so, should you?” he exclaimed, sarcastically.

Gaining courage with his breath, Phil broke out impetuously, —

“O father! don't be angry at what I say! It's only what mother used to say; and I know it is true, and you know it. It's dreadful to be always having to dodge your debts in this way. Mr. Minkins dunned me on your account as I came along, and so did the tailor and the doctor, all within five minutes; and people on the street heard them, and I never felt so mortified in all my life. Why can't we pay our debts, like other people?”

“Because it is n't convenient, that's all. I'd pay if I could. Don't be a fool, boy! Take it easy, as I do.”

Mr. Farlow puffed his cigar and resumed his walk.

“I wish you would n't take it so easy,” said Phil, beginning to cry. “If you spent some of the time in earning money which you do in making debts and studying how to get rid of paying them, it would be so much better. Why don't we go to work? I'd rather.”

At this the man lost his temper, and with a

furious gesture flung his cigar from the window. It was only half smoked, and he did not know where he was to get another ; but that made no difference with the improvident Mr. Farlow.

“ Things have come to a pretty pass,” he cried, angrily, “ when a man has to be lectured by his own son. I can stand a good many things, but I can’t stand that.”

He seemed convulsed with passion. Phil regarded him with fear and pity, strangely mixed with thrills of affection : for, after all, this man was his father ; and it pierced him to the heart to see him so moved.

The storm was only a gust, however ; it was over in a moment. A false and shallow life of self-indulgence undermines the character, and renders it incapable of any deep and permanent feeling. Mr. Farlow could not even be serious for five minutes.

“ Come ! ” He turned again, after stamping madly across the room, and confronted the wretched boy with mocking laughter “ Get up on the chair there, and preach your dad a sermon. By the laws, you shall ! ”

He was actually laying hold of the lad, and poor Phil was struggling to escape, when there came a rap at the door.

CHAPTER III.

MR. SOLOMON BASS.

MR. SOLOMON BASS appeared, a short, fat man, with puffy, purple cheeks, and small imbedded eyes, like those of a pig. Farlow was himself again.

“Ah, Mr. Landlord! Just in time.”

Perceiving an ominous paper in Solomon's hand, and a determined look in the dull eyes, he added, quickly, —

“I was just sending my boy down to ask you to make out our bill. Regret extremely to leave your hospitable roof, you know, but business is pressing; and if you will have the kindness to get your account ready —”

“I've got it here,” said Solomon, dryly; while Sallie showed her teeth in the doorway behind him

“All right.” Mr. Farlow took the paper and tossed it carelessly on the table. “I'll examine it and arrange matters in the morning.”

“Can't ye just as well arrange matters now?” said Solomon Bass.

He was not only pig-eyed, he was also known to be extremely pig-headed, when he had once made up his mind. That his mind was made up now, Mr. Farlow could see by the lurid light in his red-veined and mottled face.

"Oh, certainly!" said the boarder, with intrepid cheerfulness, taking up the paper again. He held it toward the open window, and scanned it with an air at once complacent and critical.

"*Board for self and son, forty-four dollars. Teams, twenty-seven dollars.* I suppose that is all right. But what is this? *Hen's nest?* I have n't had any hen's nest."

"It ain't hen's nest. What is it, Sallie?" said Mr. Bass.

"*Sundries!*" said Sallie, scornfully. "I don't write so bad as all that!"

"*Sundries;* why, of course!" said Mr. Farlow, pleasantly. "It's very well written indeed, Sallie; only the light is poor. *Twenty-nine dollars.* Ain't that rather steep for sundries, Mr. Landlord?"

"Guess not." Mr. Bass rolled over from one leg to the other, while a shrewd twinkle came into the small eyes. "You've had everything charged, you know, even to your cigars; which ain't common with gentlemen, and which it ain't my custom

to allow, not by no manner of means. But while you was waiting for your baggage, which you said had gone astray, and expecting your remittances, which did n't seem to come, I did n't like to crowd you."

"Very kind in you, indeed," said Mr. Farlow. "I shall have the pleasure of recommending your house and its obliging landlord, and sending you a great many guests." And once more he tossed the bill on the table, as if it had been settled.

"I've been more obliging than I ever shall be again, if I know myself," said Solomon Bass; "and I can't say as I hanker much for the kind of guests you'll be likely to send. If you object to the sundries, there's the items, — two columns of drinks, you'll notice."

"I notice," laughed the boarder. "That's all right. I only regret I did n't make it three columns. I owe you a hundred dollars, Mr. Bass."

Mr. Bass rolled over on the other leg, and winked approvingly.

"Which, I'm sorry to say, I must continue to owe for a few days," Mr. Farlow added, in his easy way. "My remittances have n't come, and I'm going to see about them."

"This is how you propose to arrange it, is it?" cried Solomon.

an idea strikes me. I'll leave him as a hostage, — to have and to hold, possess and enjoy, till I make full payment of the hundred I owe you."

"Think I'm a fool?" muttered Solomon, after stupidly staring for a moment, as if unable to take in this strange proposition.

Sallie pulled his arm and whispered something in his ear.

"Nonsense, Sal!" He pushed her impatiently off. "What good would the boy be to me? I should only have him to feed."

He was going from the room, when Farlow, who had been drumming again, called after him.

"Consider it, will you? 'T will be better than trying the arrest dodge, and so losing all chance of getting your money. Well, as you please."

CHAPTER IV.

MISS SALLIE BASS.

“O FATHER!” exclaimed the horrified boy, after Bass was gone, “you would n’t do it, would you?”

“Why not? It’s the easiest way out of our present difficulties. I shall strike a streak of luck, and send for you before winter.”

“You are always talking about a streak of luck,” retorted Phil, his eyes flashing through tears. “You never struck one yet, and you never will.”

“Won’t I?” said his father, with a resentful curl of the lip. “Then of course you’ll be better off here than roughing it with me.”

“But, father, put me to work at some honest trade; or take me with you. Don’t pawn me, as you would an old coat. O father!”

Phil was earnestly pleading when Sallie reappeared.

“Pa wants to see you down-stairs, Mr. Farlow,” she said, with a gleam of triumph in her good-natured face.

"You've talked him over?" said Farlow, eagerly.

"I guess so," said Sallie, with a smile and nod.

"Don't go! don't, father!" And Phil threw himself forward to prevent his father from rising from the chair.

"Don't hold me," said Farlow, struggling to his feet. "It will be all right. Let go!"

He unclasped Phil's hands by main force, and left the room, while the boy fell face downward upon the vacant chair, sobbing and refusing to be consoled by the sympathetic Sal.

"Come, Phil," said the girl, trying to lift him up; "I would n't feel so about it. I should be glad if he did leave me here, if I was you. What do you want to keep with him for?"

"He is my father," said the wretched boy. "I would n't mind his leaving me; but to think of his doing it in this way."

"That shows what sort of a man he is," urged Sal. "The sooner you are rid of him the better. You like this place, don't you? Have n't you had a good time here, rozberrying and blackberrying, sassafrasing and checkerberrying? and finding sweet-flag and spruce-gum? Don't I know the nice spots? and hain't I took you to 'em?"

There was not a youngster in the neighborhood

more familiar with the woods and fields than Bass's tomboy, as she was called ; and she had indeed shown Phil all their treasures ; but he turned a deaf ear to her persuasions now.

“There's piles of trout to be ketched yet,” she went on ; “and I'll go with you next time, and show you the pool where me and pa hauled out the lunkers last spring. And the frost grapes ! I know the shore in the meadows where the bushes and trees are covered with 'em ! It's perty near time for 'em now ; and I would n't miss 'em for anything.”

Phil sat up in the chair, still disconsolate, however, in view of all these promised delights.

“Think of his offering to pawn me, — for that's what it amounts to,” he said, in a fresh burst of rage. “What would my mother say ? Don't talk to me of frost grapes !”

“And you really want to go off with that man !” cried Sallie. “O Phil ! what are you thinking of ? Jest at the beginning of nutting time ! You never was in the woods after a big blow in the fall of the year, or you would never be willing to leave this place, — with nuts getting ripe, — let me tell ye ! We can gether bushels ; and have all we want to eat and lay up for winter, and some to sell besides.”

“To sell !” said Phil growing interested as a pros-

pect opened of his raising money and paying some of his father's debts.

"Of course, to sell! And then there's cider time coming. I guess you never took apples to a cider-mill and watched the grinding and pressing, and the cider running down the grooves in little rivers. And, oh my! did you ever suck new cider through a straw?"

"I knew he would do almost anything to dodge a debt, but I never thought he would do this,"-said the inconsolable Phil.

"The fact is," replied the girl, candidly, "he is no sort of a man. If he can jest eat and drink, and smoke, and ride around and treat his friends with other folks' money, that's all he thinks of for the time. Little he cares what happens to you or anybody to-morrow. Every one sees through him after a little while. Only to-day he promised our Bridget a silk dress. You should have seen her laugh as soon as his back was turned! 'He has a rich mouth, but a poor pocket,' says she. 'If I wait for the gown he will give me, you'll see me going in rags'"

Sallie imitated the Irish brogue and ended with a laugh. Thereupon Phil flared up.

"You sha'n't make fun of my father! He's a gentleman, whatever you may say; and he has always been kind to me."

“Well, I do declare!” Sallie replied, sitting on a hassock and looking at him with amused wrinkles about her freckled nose, and her big teeth shining. “Kind! He’s jest awful kind to you now, ain’t he? I’d foller him all over the world, if I was you. I was going to tell you of the sleigh-rides we’ll have next winter,—they’re dreadful nice! And the spelling schools and the day schools you could go to if you wished. But no matter. There’s the bell. Your fish are fried, and you’d better go down and get your supper.”

“I sha’n’t eat any supper till I know,” Phil declared. Nor could she, by the most persistent coaxing, induce him to go down.

“I hate you!” he suddenly broke out, seeing the plain face close to his, smiling altogether too sweetly upon him. “And I wish you would let me alone!”

“Oh, well! I can do that!” cried Sallie, with spirit, jumping up. “Some time you’ll maybe know who your friends was and wish you’d kep’ ’em. I spoke a good word for you to pa. He don’t want you. ‘No son of such a man as that,’ says he, ‘will ever be worth the husks he sleeps on.’ I did n’t think so, and I teased him to let you stay. This is the thanks I get for it. Hate me, do you?” And Miss Sallie waltzed scornfully out of the room.

CHAPTER V.

IN PAWN.

PHIL knew he had done her wrong, and was sorry for it when it was too late. Her sympathy was better than none; and why should he have been so irritated at the sight of her homely features thrust near his own?

His anxiety was more than he could bear, now that he was left alone. Determined to know the worst, he was going to find his father, when that light-hearted delinquent came swaggering into the room, smiling with satisfaction and smoking another cigar.

"Have you pawned me?" Phil demanded, with a sort of sullen fierceness burning in his red, wet eyes.

"Pawned you? What are you talking about?" said Farlow, evasively. "That's not the proper phrase to use, my boy."

"I don't care for the phrase, I mean the thing," replied Phil. "I've seen enough of pawning when I've been knocking about with you. I know what it is. Sometimes you call it shoving things up a spout. Say, have you shoved me up?"

“Nothing of the sort.” Farlow paced the room and puffed. “I merely mentioned leaving you here as a hostage. That’s nothing new or dishonorable or uncommon: history is full of hostages.”

“Well,” cried Phil, his fear and grief giving place to desperate defiance, “have you done it?”

“If I have, it means simply that you are to stay here a little while until I can make arrangements for you elsewhere. That’s all. It’s nothing you need be troubled about. But it’s not decided yet,” Farlow added, in a careless tone; “and it won’t be till morning. So come along to supper.”

“I won’t go to supper till you tell me it is not to be at all,” said Phil. “I ought to have something to say about it, and I say this: if you use me to pay for your horses and liquors and cigars, I never will call you father again, and I’ll run away from this house as soon as the thing is done. Now you know.”

“Well, well!” said Farlow, in a slightly embarrassed, mildly conciliatory tone. “I did n’t think you would feel so about it. Of course, if you object, there’s an end of it. I’ll see what else can be done in the morning.”

Phil knew his father too well to be fully satisfied with this smooth answer. How could he tell that it was not one of his easy, convenient falsehoods?

He went down to supper, however, and afterwards tried to learn the true state of the case from Sallie. But Sallie was resentful, and would have nothing to say to him. She turned her back at his approach, and went off romping with one or two companions.

Phil was deeply hurt ; he felt as if he had lost his only friend. A lonely, anxious, miserable night awaited him. Even if he was not to be pledged as security for his father's debts, he knew too well that their troubles were not over.

In order that he might be up early the next morning, he went early to bed. But he could not sleep.

"How can *he* sleep?" he said to himself, hearing his father's deep and steady breathing in the bed near his own. "Why am I troubled when he cares so little for what may happen?"

He tossed feverishly about until near midnight. Then he lost himself, and the first thing he knew, it was morning.

He started up. It was broad day. A streak of sunlight stole through the curtains and fell across the coverlet. He sat up and looked over eagerly at the bed in which his father had slept. It was tumbled and empty. His father was gone.

Phil sprang out with trepidation and pulled on

his clothes. Hurrying down-stairs, he found the landlord sweeping the piazza floor.

"Where is my father?" he asked.

Solomon rested his broom, and turned his small, sleepy-looking eyes on the agitated boy.

"Your father? He left here a good hour ago."

"Where has he gone?"

"That's more'n I know. He told some of his creditors he would square accounts with 'em this mornin'; so what does he do but kick his heels at 'em 'fore they was stirrin',—expectin' the stage to pick him up, I s'pose."

The boy stood panting a moment, then said,—

"Did he square accounts with you?"

"Don't you know he did?" said Solomon, going on with his sweeping.

"Did he pay you?" Phil demanded. "Did he give you any money?"

"About as much as the feller sold his dog for," Bass replied, with just a gleam of humor in his puffed and red-veined face. "Sold him for a hundred dollars, but took his pay in puppies,—five puppies, at twenty dollars apiece. You are the puppies, Bub."

"He has sold me?" said Phil, in a tremor of passion.

"Not edzacly that." Solomon rolled over on one

leg and rested his broom again. "To git my pay for keepin' him and you, I'm to keep you a spell longer. That's where the puppies comes in. He says he'll settle in cash and take you away within a month. Mabby he will and mabby he won't; so me and you may as well make up our minds to like each other, Bub."

"I told him I would n't stay here in any such way as that," cried Phil, excitedly; "and I won't!"

"I ruther guess ye will," Solomon replied, his pig-eyes dully blinking. "I've got it in writin'."

Phil turned abruptly and went back into the house.

In his room he crammed a few small things into his pockets and buttoned an extra shirt under his coat. Then he went quietly out by the back way, speaking with no one, and hid in the barn. There he watched through a crack for a good opportunity, and, seeing that he was not followed, soon slipped out by a small rear door, and took to the fields.

He sauntered carelessly along until some bushes on the edge of a piece of woods concealed him from view; then he began to run. Over rocks and through thickets he made his way, and in half an hour came out on the open road, a mile from the village.

It was the stage road, — the same Farlow had probably taken. But his design was neither to overtake his father nor to be picked up by the coach. He had no settled plan, but only a vague determination to get well away from Bass and begin a new life in some place where he was unknown.

The cool air of the August morning, the sunshine striking through the trees that overshadowed the track, the dewy freshness, action, and freedom, — all this had a charm for him even then, and made him half forget his griefs in a sense of exhilaration.

The woods, opening on one side, gave him glimpses of the mountains he loved so well, and he stopped to take a farewell look at Old Blue.

From a high rock by the roadside he gazed up across barren pastures and wooded spurs, to the far-away, peaceful top, sunlit, clothed in firs that sprung from gulfs of shadow, where the blue light deepened to blackness. He thought of the bright streams that came down from chasms in those crags, the trout-pools and cascades, and heaved a sigh of regret. Should he never visit them again?

The roar of one of those brooks reached his ear as it tumbled down through a hollow and crossed the road a few rods farther along. He would bid good

by to that, and then hasten on, wherever good or ill fortune might lead.

But just as he was going to step down from the rock he heard a wagon, driven rapidly. He thought he knew the sound of those wheels, and waited to let them pass. Sure enough, it was Bass's light open buggy, with Bass himself whipping his white horse along the road.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE WOODS.

THE pig-eyes were looking straight before and did not see Phil perched on the rock, who said to himself, —

“He thinks I have gone on after father, and he is chasing us. Let him chase! I don’t want anything to do with him.”

So, instead of jumping down from the rock, Phil climbed over a knoll and entered the hollow through which the brook poured. Remembering that he had had no breakfast, he resolved to find one whilst waiting for Bass to return and leave the way clear for his journey.

Up through the woods he went, keeping the course of the brook, now crossing it on stones, now climbing the banks, and clambering over ledges mossy or bare, passing many a waterfall and clear, dark pool. Natural places for trout, but too near the village not to be all “fished out,” as he had learned by previous experience.

At last he reached a spot far up in the gorge,

seldom penetrated by any but the most adventurous fishermen.

Beyond a steep ledge, down which the brook flashed and foamed, the woods opened; and he found himself in a little glen. In the midst was a rocky basin, blocked by great boulders, amidst which the shadowy water swirled.

On his way through the thickets he had cut a birch rod, to which he now attached the end of a line he took from his pocket. To the other end he looped an artificial fly, selected for its color from a dozen he carried in an old envelope. It was soon skipping over the deep places, beside the boulders, and in the foam where the brook poured down into the basin.

A silvery flash, a tightening of the line, and a bending of the rod: a fine trout was hooked. Two others were soon landed.

Then Phil, leaving rod and line flung across the boulders, opened his pocket-knife at the water's edge and proceeded to prepare his breakfast.

Having dressed his fish, and laid them on green leaves, he looked for a good place to make a fire. On one side the sun lay bright and warm on ledges where only a few stunted saplings grew. Gathering there a pile of dry sticks in a favorable spot, he

struck a match, touched it to a handful of dead leaves, and soon had a blaze.

While the fire was kindling he shaped two or three sharp forks out of green twigs, to be used as spits, impaled his fishes on them, and soon had one broiling over the coals.

It was not the first time he had lunched in that primitive fashion, and learned how sweet to a hungry boy a small trout is, cooked in the woods beside the stream from which it was taken, held hot in the fingers, and eaten without salt.

After breakfast, having drunk from the basin, and then used it as a finger-bowl, he resolved to explore the gorge farther up.

"It's my last chance," he said, "and I may as well make the most of it. I'll see what's in the great hole I found the other day."

Half hidden by a thicket, under the steep side of the mountain, — so steep that it seemed toppling down, — was a cavern, which looked as if it had been scooped out by the torrent in bygone ages before it had cut its present bed through the rocks below. The floor was covered with moss and dead leaves; the walls were smooth, the rock above projected like a roof.

A wild fancy crossed the mind of the lonely and homeless boy.

“ I might sleep here, and live on the fish in the brook.”

But then a shudder seized him, as he thought of the gloomy autumn coming, the long, dreary nights, and the terrible winter. Could he build a fireplace in there, wall up the entrance, and protect himself from hunger and cold ?

He was too sensible a boy to dream of such a thing, except in the mood of doubt and desperation he was in that morning. As it was, he soothed his anxious soul by planning a possible hermitage, clothing himself in the skins of savage beasts (for there were bears in the mountains), and living a life of solitude and misanthropy astonishing to men.

He lay a long while on the dry, mossy floor, digesting his breakfast, listening to the brook singing through the gorge, and indulging these wild fancies. Then, startled by a rustling of the bushes, he sprang to his feet.

His first thought was that a bear was coming home to the very den into which he had strayed, and that he had better get out of it.

He stopped near the entrance, however, to obtain a sight of the approaching object, and saw what almost made him laugh.

Not a bear, by any means, but, standing among

loose stones above the brook, where scattered poplars grew, looking about with an air of bewildered curiosity, her freckled face squinting in the slanting bars of sunshine, the tomboy, Sallie Bass.

Phil's heart gave a leap of joy, not simply because the comer was not a bear, but because in his friendless solitude he recognized a friend.

He yearned to go out and show himself to Sallie, but restrained the first eager impulse, remembering that he had left his life at the tavern behind him, and dreading to renew any ties that might draw him back to it.

That Sallie was in search of him he could not doubt. She pushed the boughs aside and looked all about, — down at the brook and up at the crag, — then stopped and listened, her lips apart and her white teeth gleaming among the green leaves.

She carried her sunbonnet in her hand, and her short red hair was tumbled over her eyes; not like the artificial "bangs" of the period, whose barbarous ugliness spoils many a pretty brow, but with an unkempt carelessness well in keeping with her character of tomboy.

Phil laughed, with sympathetic tears in his eyes, as he watched her looking for him up and down the gorge, while he was so near. She seemed to hesi-

tate, undecided whether to turn back or go on, when something in the appearance of the overhanging ledge attracted her, and she gazed straight at the bushes through which he peered.

“ Phil Farlow ! ” she cried ; “ are you in there ? ”

He could hardly keep from tittering nervously as she advanced towards him, groping among the poplars and fixing her eyes on the very spot where he was, still without seeing him. Suddenly she started back with a half-frightened expression, then darted resolutely forward, thrusting the bushes aside.

CHAPTER VII.

SALLIE'S ERRAND.

THE two met face to face. Phil burst into an excited laugh.

“Wal, if you ain’t a perty feller!” cried Sallie, laughing too, but with very different emotions. “What a chase you have given me! What did you hide away from me for?”

“I did n’t hide away from you. What were you chasing me for?” retorted Phil.

“Because I wanted to find you,” said Sallie, “and be friends with you again, — and — and I — I’m awful sorry I was cross with you last night: you had trouble enough without that.”

“I did n’t blame you,” said Phil. “I said a horrid thing to you. It was because I was just worried to death. I did n’t mean it.”

“I did n’t believe you did,” cried Sallie, overjoyed. “If I had, I should n’t have come here to find you and bring you something.”

“What’s that?” Phil asked, eagerly.

"A letter your father left for you." And she took a crumpled envelope from her pocket.

Phil turned pale as he broke it open and read its brief contents. His first agitation changed to disappointment, and, returning the letter to the envelope, he thrust it into his coat.

"I thought you might be glad to get it," Sallie said, eying him curiously.

"So I should have been, if he had written only one word to —"

He choked, winked away a tear, and added, bitterly,

"All he says is, that he thought it best not to wake me to say good by ; he felt obliged to go without me, and I shall hear from him in a few days. Just as if —"

But evidently the boy's feelings were softening a little towards his father. He took out the letter and read it again, then heaved a sigh.

"I suppose he means what he says. But it's little enough he will ever do for me after this. I've only myself to depend on, and I'm glad I know it."

"Just as though you didn't have any friends," said Sallie, "nor any home."

"I've no home but this," replied Phil, with a

touch of the melancholy with which he had been investing his fancied hermit life.

"This den?" said Sallie. "What a strange place it is! What a place to hide if a man was hunted!"

"So I thought," Phil answered. "But you found me. How did you know I was here?"

"I heard a noise, and I knew you was n't fur off."

"How did you know it?"

"Why, did n't I see your fish-pole and line on the rocks and your fire smoking? I should have met you if you had gone back down the gorge, so I believed you had gone up."

"How did you know it was *my* fire?"

"Because you went off without your breakfast; and I saw the sticks you br'iled your trout on and the fish-bones you left, — me and you br'iled our fish together there once, you know; so when pa heard you had been seen on the road, but could n't find you, I guessed where you had gone. Don't ye see?"

"You're a cute girl, Sallie."

"Wal, I guess I ain't nobody's fool, when ye come to that," said Sallie, with a little toss of her head. "Come, you're going back home with me, je know it?"

"I don't know anything of the kind," replied Phil,

turning cold towards her. "Your father has bought me." And he told the story of the puppies.

"That's jest pa's nonsense!" laughed Sallie. "You're jest going to stay there till your father sends for you; that's all there is to it."

"Till he takes me out of pawn!" said Phil, an angry light coming into his eyes. "I told both him and your father that I would n't stay on any such terms; and I won't!"

They had walked out of the cavern and stood among the saplings. Sallie looked at him saucily.

"Do you know what pa thinks?"

"I don't care what he thinks."

"Then it won't hurt your feelings if I tell ye," she said, with a laugh. "He thinks it's a game your father and you have played before."

"A game?" he repeated.

"Yes. He runs in debt, and then, instead of pledging a trunk, or anything that has n't got legs, he leaves his son, that has legs, and will run off on 'em. Then you go with him to some other place and play the same trick over again."

Phil flushed resentfully. "You say that?"

"No; that's what pa says, and that's what I'm afraid he'll make everybody in town think, if you don't go back there."

“Why is he so anxious to keep me?”

“Truth is, I teased him to. Pa'll do anything for me, ye know. Then, of course, he wants something to keep your father in mind of the hundred dollars he owes us. Come, Phil, do go back.”

“And run up a still larger bill by boarding there? Not I!” he exclaimed.

“Why, you can do a few chores to pay for your board, if that will suit you any better. I'll fix it any way you like,” she promised him.

“I should n't mind a little work; that is n't it,” said Phil.

“I know that. You like to feed the calves and chickens; you have done it for fun with me many a time. I reminded pa of that; and you know you like to be about the hosses.”

“All that is n't work; it's play.”

“So much the better if you like it, for it will count for work, if you want to do it reg'lar, to pay for your board.”

Sallie looked in his face and saw that his resolution was wavering. She went on artfully, —

“Then, if you should want to pitch into work in earnest, I don't see why you could n't do it and pay off the debt that worries you so. Take yourself out of pawn, as you call it. I would; and, instead of



“What did you hide away from me for?” [p. 44].



“Huh!” said the wondering Solomon” [p. 53].

being ashamed of what my pa had done, I'd jest be proud of what *I*'d done."

She watched the working of his features and saw the light of new hope and resolution come into them. She continued, —

"That would be my style. You would n't catch me running away. When I got ready to go, I'd jest walk away, independent of everybody, so that folks should say, 'There goes a smart chap, and an honest chap, one that's earned the respect of people, say nothing of a pocketful of money.' That's what I'd make 'em say of *me*, if I was a boy in your place."

"I believe you would, Sallie. I wish I could." A gloom overspread the brightened face. "But I can't"

"Too proud?" said Sallie.

"That may be it. I couldn't look folks in the face and know they were saying to themselves, 'That's the boy his father pawned for his board bill.' I could n't."

"You'd make 'em forget that; or, if they remembered at all, they would say, 'There's the plucky feller that's paying his pa's debts; wish there was more such boys.'"

Phil could not help feeling that it would be a noble and courageous thing thus to redeem the

honor of the family, and that nobody whose good opinion was worth having would despise him for it.

As he was looking through the poplars at the brook tumbling down the gorge, she resumed her argument: "There 's going to be more teaming than ever when the summer boarders come next year; and if I was you, I should druther drive 'em about than do anything else. I can coax pa; I'll see 't you have a good chance."

Phil was still struggling with his pride. "How can I go back, after folks know I've started to run off?" he objected.

"Who knows it?" said Sallie. "Me an' you'll ketch a couple of big strings of trout and lug 'em home, and folks 'll jest think we've been a-fishing."

He hesitated. "I don't object to catching a few trout," he said.

"Oh, let 's!"

She ran down to the basin for his rod and line; while he, half regretting that he had conceded so much, cut another pole in the thicket. Boy-like, she also carried a line in her pocket. It was soon attached to the rod and furnished with a fly, and they began their sport,—for sport it was, even to Phil. The day was perfect. The sunshine spotted the boughs above their heads, gilding the limbs and great trunks, and

slanting down here and there to the mossy slopes and bright water; the woods were green, with the exception of now and then a maple-branch burning with the first flames of autumn; the sky above was deep blue; the flies skipped on the foam of the waterfalls; the trout leaped; the woods resounded with the music of young voices.

The fish, as they were taken from the pools, were strung upon a forked stick, which Sallie and Phil took turns in carrying. But soon a second stick had to be cut, and they had each a string. By the time both were well loaded with handsome trout, the resolution with which Phil started out in the morning had grown faint in his heart, and he was ready to go home with Sallie.

"What's there?" she asked, as he turned aside from the brook and lifted a piece of dry bark from behind a mossy log.

He took out from that rude hiding-place a pair of socks, and the shirt which he had buttoned under his coat before leaving the hotel.

"I wonder you didn't find them when you followed on my track," he said, laughing rather sheepishly over this meagre outfit for a journey.

It was like a dream to him now, that he had started to run off in that fashion. How much more sensible

it seemed to stay with Bass, for a few days at least, or until some visible fortune beckoned him elsewhere.

He buttoned his extra shirt under his coat again, watched by the shrewd Sallie, who was not quite certain yet that her persuasions had prevailed.

"You're going home with me, I know," she said, with a laugh.

"I suppose I must, — if you say so," replied Phil.

"Of course I say so!" she cried, gleefully. "Come on, now: we've got fish enough."

They wound up their lines and put them in their pockets, throwing away the poles; then they started for home with their strings of trout.

They attracted no little attention as they entered the village, for the report had spread that both father and son had left town.

"Never mind their staring at you," whispered Sallie. "Walk as if you was as good as anybody, and a little better. Head high. That's it."

"I vum!" said storekeeper Minkins, gazing from his door, "if there ain't little Phil, after all! Jest been a-fishin' with Bass's tomboy! Hallo!" he called across the street, "where did you git *them*?"

"Up in the gorge under Old Blue," replied Phil, adding, in an undertone, "He always asks where I get my fish."

"Why don't ye give him such an answer as 'll shet him up?" said Sallie. "I would."

"Why did n't ye take yer pole along?" Minkins inquired; he could n't help mentioning that pole.

"We don't need a pole where we've been," said Sallie.

"Sho! How du ye ketch 'em?"

"Pick 'em," she answered, saucily. "We've found a place where they grow on trees."

Minkins laughed good-naturedly. "Jes like Bass's tomboy, for all the world," he said, as she and Phil walked quickly on. "Can't nobody git the start o' *her*."

In the tavern yard they met Solomon Bass, who opened his pig-eyes wide at sight of Phil.

"Wal! where *you* been?" he demanded, gruffly.

"Don't you see?" cried Sallie, swinging the string of fish up almost into his puffy face. Then she stuck her sharp elbows into his fat ribs as she passed between Phil and him, saying, in a whisper, —

"'S all right! Don't say nothing, or you 'll spile it."

"Huh!" said the wondering Solomon.

He made no allusion to the morning's adventure, nor greeted the boy's return with any other sound than that grunt of doubtful satisfaction.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE AT THE TAVERN.

SO Phil went back and resumed his life there, much as if nothing had happened.

It must be owned that he missed his father: nobody could help liking that jovial gentleman; and Phil was sincerely attached to him, with all his faults.

“What a man he might have been,” he said to himself, mourning over those faults and the separation they had led to. “If he was only as honest as he is pleasant, and if he made people respect as well as like him! I suppose it is the best thing for *me* to be away from him.”

The mother’s part in the boy—his heart and conscience—had often noticed with alarm how easy it was for him to evade the truth and frame false excuses, when he was under his father’s influence.

“I will be truthful and steady now,” he vowed within himself, in the loneliness of his room that

night "And I never will smoke and drink and run in debt like him."

He had seen enough of the ruin caused by such habits of self-indulgence.

He did not sleep in the fine large chamber he had occupied with his father, but was given a poor little bed in a garret. He felt the change deeply, but said to himself, with a stout heart, —

"What else could I expect? Bass does n't believe he will ever get his hundred dollars, and I am only puppies."

He left Sallie to arrange matters for him with her father, and went on, the next day, cheerfully helping about the lighter chores, as he had often done before.

Soon Bass began to ask him to do other things.

"Don't ye think ye can milk a cow, Bub? Guess ye can."

Phil said he would try; and from that time milking — not only one cow, but often two or three — became one of his stated tasks.

He no longer sat at the hotel table with the guests, — the guests, indeed, except now and then a transient one, were gone, — but ate with the family, not greatly pleased with their coarse manners and plain fare.

By degrees Solomon began to make his requests commands, addressing Phil as he would any other servant.

“Take some barrels, Bub, and pick up the rest of them apples; and don’t be all day about it, nuther!”

The last phrase hurt Phil’s feelings; but it was one which whoever worked for Bass had to get used to, soon or late.

Mrs. Bass also found it convenient to call upon him when she needed help about the house; and even the ostler ordered him around.

The more work he had to do, the less fun he found in it. It was not like running out when he liked, with Sallie, to hunt hen’s eggs or feed the chickens and pigs.

But he had the satisfaction of feeling that he was at least paying his way; nor did Sallie’s promises of pleasant pastimes fail him altogether. They gathered frost grapes and shagbarks in their season, and helped about the cider making; and he enjoyed the felicity of sucking that liquor in its innocence through a straw.

Then, as Sallie was going to school in the winter she managed to have him go too.

His education had been sadly neglected since his

mother died. But he was naturally a bright and ambitious pupil, and, while working nights and mornings to pay for his board, he went to his studies with a freshness and earnestness which put him rapidly through the lower classes of the district school. Before the winter was over he was well up with the average boys of his age, and ahead of some.

Meanwhile, what had Farlow done to redeem his pledge and take his son out of pawn?

About a week after he went away Phil received a letter from him, full of the usual promises. He expected very soon to be able to pay his debt of a hundred dollars, and provide a home for them both. In about a month came another of similar import, containing, along with fresh promises, excuses for not keeping the old ones.

It was winter before Phil heard from him again. The third letter, badly written on poor paper, was brief and discouraging.

“I fully expected to strike a streak of luck when I last wrote, and to have you with me before this. I have been disappointed; but I shall still be able to send for you in a few days. As I shall probably leave this place before a reply from you could reach me, you need not write until you hear from me again.”

That was the last letter from him Phil ever received. It was as if his father had been going farther and farther from him, and at last had disappeared in the dark.

There were other things about his hotel life, besides the hard work, which Phil did not like.

The bar-room was the resort of tipplers and idlers, for whose company he had conceived a strong disgust. He could not bear their lounging habits, stale tobacco smoke, and dull jokes. His native refinement held him aloof from them; and no doubt the sight of his father's dissipations had helped to inspire him with a wholesome hatred of such things.

Besides, he wished to give his leisure hours that winter to his books.

But Bass found it convenient at times to leave him in charge of the bar. Even Sallie did not object to setting out bottle and decanter on the counter for the patrons of the house, and receiving their change with their jokes, and why should he?

But Phil made up his mind early as to one thing, — he would not taste strong drink, and he would not sell it.

This silly notion of his, as Bass called it, angered that worthy man; and Sallie, to save trouble between them, tried to talk Phil out of it.

“What’s the use o’ your being so awful odd and offish?” she argued. “A feller can’t even get you to play checkers in the evening lately”; by a “feller” she meant herself, — she was always teasing him to play checkers or cards. “What’s the use of your running to your books every chance you can get? I should a sight druther tend bar, if I was you.”

“It is n’t simply my books I care for,” Phil replied: “your father is getting rich selling liquor, while mine has been ruined by drinking it; so you and I look at the thing differently. I won’t sell it, and all the world can’t make me. Now you understand.”

Fortunately Sallie did understand; and, seeing that he could not be persuaded to yield to her father, she persuaded her father to yield to him.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW SUIT OF CLOTHES.

I N spring Phil left school. Then came hard work again.

Bass was preparing for a busy season. New boarding-houses were building in the village, in expectation of summer visitors. The character of his own house prevented it from competing with others in entertaining the better class of boarders; and he had found that his chances for profit lay in his bar and his stable; so, while others enlarged their accommodations for guests, he provided room for more horses by building a new barn.

He had controlled the livery-stable business in the village hitherto, and he meant to keep at the head of it in future. He bought out his principal competitor and engaged him as a driver. With two others, who could not be bought out, he made an arrangement for keeping up prices, for their mutual advantage.

"They had to come to't," Phil heard him say to Lorson, his new man. "If they had n't I'd have made it perty hot for 'em, le' me tell ye! Summer

boarders don't come but once a year, and they don't stay long, and we must make money out on 'em while we can."

"That's so!" said Lorson; and indeed that seemed to be the opinion of the village people generally.

Bass was a good sort of fellow in a gruff way. He showed a real liking for Phil, and, after the liquor-selling business was settled, treated him with friendly familiarity and indulgence.

"I like the way you take holt," he said to him one day. "Ain't nothin' surly about ye, and ye don't act as if ye was 'fraid o' s'ilin' yer hands. I did n't know but what ye might work in and be a pardner o' mine, runnin' the business after a while. Sallie hinted it, and I did n't know."

Phil colored very red. Sallie had already hinted as much to him.

"I'm afraid it would n't suit me, as a permanent thing," he replied.

"I'm afraid 't would n't, sence you're so sot agin sellin' at the bar. You made a mistake, Bub; but I concluded to let ye have your way. You like hosses, though, and I 'xpect ye won't have no sich silly notion agin drivin' team for summer boarders when they come."

“Of course, I’ve no objection to that,” said Phil.

“Ye shall have the chance, Bub,” replied Bass, good-humoredly.

Phil was now fifteen years old, of good size, and well made. He had outgrown his best suit of clothes,—to say nothing of his having worn them out,—so that his limbs had a rather ungainly look, and his manners appeared awkward; but he had a fine, ruddy face, frank and intelligent, if not very handsome, and when he spoke or smiled it lighted up with a bright and engaging expression which won him friends at first sight.

Summer visitors came early to the village that season, and as a driver and guide he became popular with them at once.

He not only knew the fords and mountain roads, Cathedral Woods, the Twin Cascades, and other noted places which everybody visited, but there were nooks of ferns, curious rock formations, beautiful little waterfalls and pools, which no other teamster seemed to think worth showing, but which Phil would unexpectedly take his parties to, always to their surprise and delight. He thus proved that an obliging disposition and a love of nature are not bad qualities in a guide.

He became a favorite with Mrs. Shedrick’s board-

ers especially. After they had had him a few times, they would accept no other driver, preferring to postpone their rides when Phil could not be obtained.

He enjoyed this life extremely: there was a flavor of adventure about it. It gratified his passion for wild scenes, for woods and mountain streams. He liked the society which it brought him in contact with; and he had the satisfaction of feeling that he was earning as much money for Bass as a full-grown man.

Bass, too, was well pleased. He treated Phil with great friendliness, and said to him one day, "Ain't there suthin I can do for ye, Bub? I'd like to."

"Yes," Phil answered; "stop calling me Bub, for one thing."

"Haw! haw! Wal, I'll call ye Phil then."

Phil said that would suit him better.

"Wal, Phil! Sallie thinks you need a new suit of clo'es, and I d' n' know but what you do. What do *you* think?"

"I think as Sallie thinks," said Phil.

"Wal, come along over to Minkins's store."

A serviceable ready-made suit was found, of gray stuff, for which Bass paid the not very extravagant sum of eleven dollars. It fitted the boy tolerably well, and was not unbecoming.

"Now you're made!" cried Solomon, slapping him on the shoulder with his fat hand. "Go home and show Sal."

Sal was delighted. "Pa done that for me," she whispered in Phil's ear. "You're han'some as a pictur', and I'm proud of you!"

Somehow these words and the admiring eyes with which she looked him over—much as if she had become a shareholder in him and was satisfied with her investment—made him feel depressed and uncomfortable; yet the thought of appearing before Mrs. Shedrick's boarders in attire that was not actually ridiculous cheered him up.

But one day a change came over Sallie Bass.

"Who was that girl I saw riding on the front seat with you this afternoon?" she demanded, spitefully.

"That was Mrs. Chadbow's daughter," replied the innocent Phil. "They are boarding at Mrs. Shedrick's. Relatives of hers, I believe."

"You was laughing and talking with her, so engaged! You didn't even look my way, when I'm sure you could n't help seeing me," said Sallie.

"I don't remember." Phil regarded her wonderingly. "Perhaps I saw you. I don't know why I did n't turn and—and lavish my smiles on you," he

added, trying to give a humorous turn to the unpleasant subject.

"I know why," cried Sallie. "You think she's jest awful sweet and perty, I know you do ; though, I must say, I don't admire your taste. And you did look jest terrible stuck up in your new clo'es. I was ashamed of you!"

"Why, Sallie!" said Phil, surprised, amused, provoked, all at once.

"Guess you forgot how you come by 'em!" she went on, in a blaze of resentment.

He wisely waited to let it burn out. He had witnessed more than one such outburst from her against other people, but never against himself. As soon as he saw her ready to hear a word of reason, he said, not without spirit, —

"I supposed I had earned the clothes, or I should never have put them on. You may think you own them. All right! But there's one thing you don't own, — that's the boy inside of 'em. And that boy, if I know him, — and I rather think I do, — that boy," cried Phil, drawing himself up, "is ready to jump out and leave you the clothes any time you say. Shall it be now?"

"No," replied Sallie, beginning to drop water on the fire ; that is to say, beginning to cry. "I did n't mean that."

“Then what did you mean?” Phil demanded “It’s my business to take people to ride; and when they see fit to talk to me, I should be a dolt not to answer. If they say pleasant things, I’m bound to be pleased, and say something agreeable in return, if I can. But if you think I was any more *engaged*, as you call it, or *stuck up*, in my new clothes, because it was Clara Chadbow talking to me instead of her mother, — or any other woman, — or any man, for that matter, — if you think that, you’re a bigger goose than I took you for. I always thought you were a pretty bright girl.”

It was Phil’s turn to show resentment, and with a stern brow he turned away.

“O Phil!” she exclaimed, detaining him. “I *was* a goose. I was mad coz you did n’t look at me, and appeared so took up with her. But — don’t — don’t take her on the front seat again, will you?”

“Well, you *are*!” he said, laughing contemptuously. “As if it was any affair of yours who sits on the seat with me; or as if I had anything to say about it! Suppose they put Clara Chadbow there again? Must I say, ‘No; Sallie Bass won’t like that’? Just fancy!”

Sallie laughed; and so the little thunder-squall passed over.

CHAPTER X.

THE BLUE NECKTIE.

AFTER two or three outbreaks of a similar nature, from the same cause, in the course of the season, Sallie saw Phil come out one Sunday morning in a new and very becoming blue necktie.

"Where did you get that?" she sharply asked.

"Some ladies I have taken to ride a good many times, — I mean, a lady," Phil replied, seeing the dangerous fire in Sallie's eyes. "She said I had been out of my way to show her places no other driver ever thinks of, and to do little errands for her, and she wanted to make me a present."

"Who was it?" Sallie inquired, looking like a panther ready to spring.

"Mrs. Chadbow," Phil answered.

"It was n't! It was that minx, Clary! I know it was, even if her mother did —"

The violent words ceased. The panther sprang. Before Phil could defend himself, before even he was aware what was happening, the necktie was seized,

stripped from his neck, and brandished in the air above Sallie's red head.

"Give that back to me!" he commanded, springing to recover it.

"No, you don't!" she cried, holding it behind her. "I won't have that saucy thing giving you presents! I'll burn it up!"

The encounter took place near the kitchen door. She started for the fire. Phil clutched her arm. She merely changed hands with the necktie, whipping it about her wrist and preparing for a struggle. She was two years older than he, and her tomboy habits had developed a youth's strength in her agile limbs.

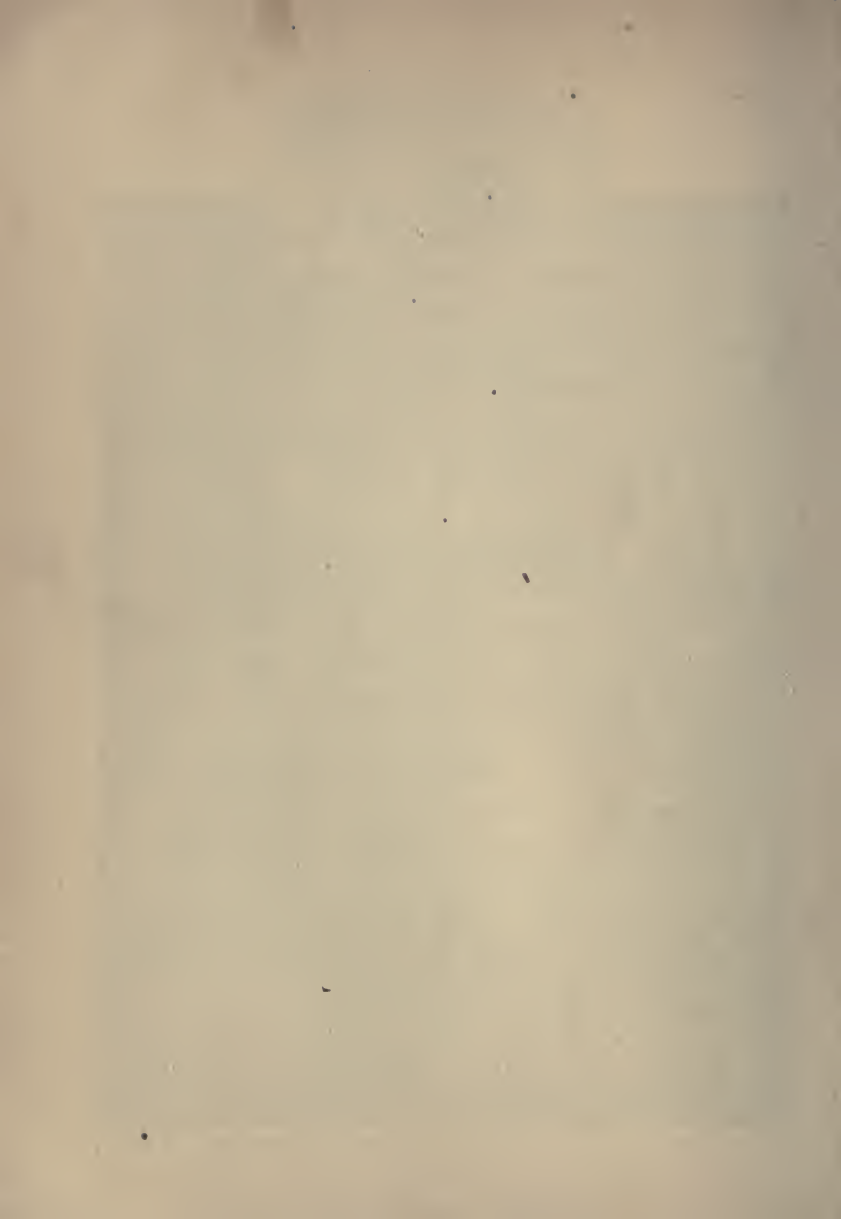
"It's none of your business," he said, "who gives me presents; and the idea of *your* calling any girl a saucy thing! If you don't give it back to me—if you burn it up—"

There was a sudden sound of rending calico, as she tore away from him, leaving a good strip of her sleeve in his grasp. The next moment she shook off into the open stove the uncoiling necktie, as if it had been a snake, and turned with a wild laugh to confront him.

He pushed her aside and snatched Mrs. Chadbow's gift flaming from the coals. Too late: it was ruined forever.



“I won't have that saucy thing giving you presents! I'll burn it up!” [p. 89].



“You may have it now!” she cried, with vindictive triumph.

He gave it a look full of wrath and indignation as he held it up, then flung it on the floor.

“That’s enough, Sallie Bass!” he exclaimed. “I’ve nothing more to do with such a girl as you.”

He walked away without another word, leaving her more scared at his conduct and ashamed of her own than if he had covered her with the bitterest reproaches.

She could not but see that, whether there was cause for her jealousy or not, she was driving him from her by her revengeful spite. She picked up the necktie, and looked ruefully at the holes which had been burnt in it, wondering whether they could be mended.

“He did look handsome in it!” she said to herself. “That’s what made me so mad. But mabby *she* did n’t give it to him; Phil’s a feller that won’t lie.”

Then she reflected that the season was nearly over, and that Clara Chadbow, with the other summer boarders, would soon be gone.

“And out of my way!” she said. “I’d ought to’ve bit my tongue and kep’ still. But I’ll make up with him; ’t ain’t the first time we’ve quarrelled.”

That was true; but Phil meant that it should be the last. The unreasoning rage which resulted in the burning of Mrs. Chadbow's beautiful present was something he could n't forgive. So when Sallie that afternoon came to the barn, where he sat on a pile of straw reading, he did not deign to look up.

"I know you're awful mad at me," she said; "and I'm sorry I burnt the necktie. I don't know what possessed me to do it!"

Phil kept his eyes bent on his book. He had worn no necktie since she snatched that from his throat.

"If you won't mind," she went on, "I'll buy you another enough sight pertier 'n that."

Then he looked up, and his face was full of scorn as he replied, "Do you think I care so much for a necktie? I can go without. And I beg you not to take the trouble to buy me one. I would never wear it."

That was all the consolation she could get from him. He went on with his reading, not even replying when she spoke to him again. Then her anger re-kindled.

"I know now!" she cried. "You hate me! That's what you told me once when I was trying hard to be good to you. I did n't want to believe it; but it has been true all the time. You've just pretended it

wa'n't, for the favors you thought you might get out of me. Oh, I detest such meanness!" And she swept into the house before the astonished Phil could open his lips to repel the unjust taunt. It rankled in his heart, for he could not bear that any one should have such an opinion of him as that; then, reflecting on her strange conduct, he was forced to believe that much of the kindness she had shown him had been dictated by a selfish motive, as base as that she attributed to him, and he resolved to go his own way wholly independent of her henceforth.

"She may show me favors or she may show me spite, purr or scratch," he said to himself, "it's all the same to me."

When he met her at breakfast the next morning she was red-eyed and silent, and he felt an ominous gloom hanging over the household. Solomon was silent, too; and Mrs. Bass, a weak and nervous woman, who was always cross when Sallie was, appeared in her worst mood. Phil went about his business in the usual way, and had got his wagon washed, when a young girl came into the yard.

"O Phil!" she cried. "I have been inquiring for you at the house. Mother wants you to take us where we found those lovely ferns the other day, as soon as you can get ready. You're not engaged?"

“No,” replied Phil; “and I will be ready in about five minutes.”

“Then I will wait and ride back with you,” said the girl, gayly.

At that moment a window over the kitchen was shut with a sharp clash, followed by a noise of rattling glass. The girl looked around surprised: she did not know the meaning of the sound; but Phil did.

He was harnessing a horse to the wagon, and she stood a little way off watching him, when Solomon Bass came out of the house. He began to assist about fastening the traces, saying at the same time,—

“Whose order is it?”

“Mrs. Chadbow’s,” Phil replied.

“Huh!” grunted Solomon. The pig-eyes gave Clara a glance. “Tell your mother I’ll send the team over right away.”

“I’m going to wait and ride,” said the smiling Clara.

“Huh!” Solomon took the gathered reins from Phil’s hands. “Call Lorson.”

“Lorson!” cried Phil. “Mr. Bass wants you for something.”

“What I want you for,” said Bass, as Lorson came out of the stable, “is to drive this team for some of Mis’ Shedrick’s boarders.”

Phil had felt what was coming. He almost gasped for breath before he could interpose, saying, in as quiet a tone as he could command, —

“I suppose they are expecting me to drive.”

“Yes,” spoke up Clara; “we want him to take us to a spot I don’t think anybody else shows to visitors.”

“There’s more’n one driver in the world,” said Bass. “Guess Lorson knows as much about places as anybody. He has druv two years, and Phil has druv two months. Git in, if you want to ride over.” He offered to help Clara mount into the wagon; but she drew back.

“No, I thank you,” she replied, with maidenly dignity. “If Phil can’t go, I don’t think my mother will want the horse.”

“I’ve something else for Phil to do. — Phil,” said Bass, turning his red-veined face and pig-eyes glowing on the boy, “you go in and tend bar till you’re wanted. Understand?”

“No, I don’t,” said Phil, in a tremor of excitement. “You know I don’t tend bar.”

“If you live and I live,” Bass replied, “you’ll tend bar when I tell ye to. D’ye hear?”

CHAPTER XI.

THE CRISIS.

FOR a moment the stout man and the slender boy stood and looked at each other.

Phil heard a derisive giggle in the direction of the broken window. At the same time Clara Chadbow turned upon him a look of fright and sympathy, and went hurriedly away.

“D’ye hear?” Bass repeated, not at all liking the expression of the eyes that met his. The boyish features were quivering, but the eyes were defiant.

“I hear,” Phil replied, and walked towards the house.

“You better!” said Bass. “Some folks have got a notion,” he continued, talking to Lorson, “’t nobody can drive a hoss for ’em but that boy. I’ll let ’em know!”

“He’ll be monopolizing the business ’fore long, if he keeps on,” replied Lorson. “I’ve told ye so ’fore now.”

He was a great, slouching fellow, — “slab-sided,” Sallie called him, — not much liked by either her or

her father. Bass would have been glad enough to get rid of him after buying him out, and Lorson knew it.

"Huh! You was right for once," said Solomon.

"You said it was my jealousy," Lorson replied. He turned his quid, screwed up one side of his face, and cast a sarcastic glance towards the broken window. "Wonder whose jealousy 't is now!"

"Mind your own business, Lorson!" muttered Bass. "Hitch the hoss under the shed. Need n't take him out o' the shafts. Somebody'll be wantin' him 'fore long."

Lorson took care of the horse, while Bass went in to see how Phil was getting on tending bar.

Phil was not tending bar at all. He had passed quickly through the bar-room, and been last seen mounting with a firm, quick step the back stairs.

Sallie waylaid her father as he was going up after him. She had goaded him on thus far, and to witness Phil's discomfiture in Clara Chadbow's presence had been to her an intoxicating delight. But she was beginning to relent.

"Pa! pa!" she whispered. "He 's gone to his room. Don't be too hard on him now, or you 'll lose him."

"Lose him!" muttered Bass. "I ruther guess not! Hain't I got him in writin'?"

He found Phil sitting by his garret window, full of trouble.

“What ye ’bout here?” said Solomon.

“I’m thinking what I ought to do,” said Phil.

“Wal, what d’ye conclude?”

Taking a hint from Sal, Bass had deemed it wise to begin in a rather low tone with the boy, and, finding him so quiet, he anticipated an easy victory.

“I conclude,” replied Phil, “that it’s time for me to leave this house.”

“Leave!” cried Solomon. “But you can’t leave without I say so! What you talkin’ ’bout?”

“I suppose I know what you mean,” said Phil, lifting his eyes, tearful with passion, to the puffy, red-veined face. “You think you can hold me as security for my father’s debt.”

“Certain I can! I’ve got his signatewer to it. If he did n’t pay me and take you away within a month I was to be entitled to your services until he did. That’s the way it reads. He hain’t done it yet, has he? And he ain’t likely to do it right away, is he?”

“No, he is n’t,” said Phil, his voice steadying and his eyes kindling. “I don’t expect him to. I believe I have worked out the debt myself, and you’ve no longer any claim on him or me.”

“Who said you could work out the debt?”

“Sallie. She told me she had talked it over with you.”

“I hain't made no agreement,” said Solomon, doggedly.

“You have n't?” cried Phil. “That shows what I've felt all along lately, — that I ought to have had some understanding with you, something besides the mere word of a girl that can change 'bout in a minute and do the most unreasonable things.”

“Sallie has been your best friend. Don't you forgit that.”

Phil laughed bitterly. “Friend! I went away from here once, and she coaxed me back, when I ought never to have come back. It is the worst place in town for a boy. You don't give me any credit for what I have done. If I had gone somewhere else, as I intended, and worked half as hard as I have here, I should have something to show for it now. Friend! she has been no friend to me!”

“If you had behaved yourself, you don't know what she might have done for you,” said Solomon.

“I don't want to know. She has done enough. But how have I misbehaved?”

“You've slighted her and cut her up; and Sallie ain't a girl to stand that.”

"I've never slighted her," Phil protested. "I've just gone about my business, earning money for you day after day. *She* has n't any mortgage on me, even if you think *you* have. What right had she to tear my necktie and burn it up? Have n't I a right to take a little present like that from a lady? If she'd been a boy, I'd have thrashed her."

"Guess you'd rue the day when you undertook to thrash Sal!" Bass grinned luridly. "I thought you ruther liked her."

"I liked her well enough," Phil admitted. "As well as I'd have liked any girl in her place, or, rather, any boy; for she was always more like a boy to me than a girl. We got along well enough till she began to act so like a lunatic, tearing off neckties and almost scratching my eyes out."

"Huh!" muttered Solomon. "Sal's kind o' quick, I own; but you go now and do as I tell ye, and treat her well, and there won't be no more trouble."

"I'm willing to work for you, Mr. Bass," said Phil, "if I can have a fair understanding about what I'm to do and what I am to earn."

"Earn!" echoed Solomon.

"Yes," Phil insisted; "this is what it has come to. Give me up that paper of my father's, promise me decent wages in future, and engage that Sal shall let

my eyes and neckties alone, then I'll drive horse, milk cows, feed pigs, sweep floors, do anything for you, Mr. Bass, except — you know well enough what — I won't tend bar."

Solomon had seated himself on the bed and kept a tolerably low tone till now.

"You won't, hey?" he cried in a loud, angry voice, jumping up. "You will! And you won't git no wages, not without I see fit to give 'em to ye. I've got ye in writin', and I'm a-gunter keep ye. I'm in your father's place, and I can shet ye up if I choose, or I can whale ye. I'll do both if ye try to run away."

Phil did not answer for a moment. He was very pale. He rose to his feet.

"You don't know what you are saying, Mr. Bass. You can't hinder my running away."

"You'll see. I can turn the key on ye. And if you go, I can fetch ye back. Take off them clo'es the fust thing," Bass added, standing between Phil and the door. "Them belong to me, any way."

"I've at least earned the clothes," said Phil. "But no matter."

He threw them quickly off and put on his old, out-grown suit. The sense of his wrongs become insupportable. He shed tears of rage.

"Now when you're ready to come to terms, le' me

know," said Solomon, gathering up the clothes in order to carry them away.

"Look here, Mr. Bass!" said Phil. "I told you I would work for you if you would pay me. I take that back. I never will do another stroke of work of any kind for a man like you, nor stay in your house a minute after I can get out. I told you, and I told my father in the beginning, that I would n't stay to be bound by any such bargain as you made with him. I never agreed to it, and I deny that you have any claim on me. So you 'd better take care what you do."

"Huh!" said Solomon, taking the key out of the door and putting it into the lock on the outside. "I know what I'm about."

He went out, the door closed, the lock clicked, and Phil was shut up.

CHAPTER XII.

TWO OF HIS FRIENDS.

THE boy was more angry than alarmed. "Stupid!" he exclaimed, listening to the landlord's retreating steps. "To think he can keep me here an hour after I make up my mind to get out! I can scream and bring help. Or I can climb from the window on the roof and go down the lightning-rod. I'm in no hurry."

He remembered how he ran off a year before. He did not mean to go in any such way now. In courage and self-reliance he felt many years older than he was then. He had a few things which he thought it worth while to take with him. He was rolling them up in a bundle, when somebody rapped lightly at the door.

"Who's there?" cried Phil.

"Me! Sallie!" answered the whispered accents of Miss Bass. He made no reply. "Phil! won't you speak to me?"

"Not with the door between us," he answered. "I am locked in."

“If I’ll unlock the door, won’t you try to get away?”

He hesitated a moment. “Not while you’re here,” he said, at length.

The door was partly opened and the freckled nose and mouth valanced with large upper teeth appeared.

“I heard every word you said about me to pa; and it was jest awful, Phil!” The girl seemed ready to cry. “But I’ll forgive you if you’ll forgive me. See what I’ve brought ye!”

It was the suit of clothes which Bass had taken away. Phil was touched.

“There’s something good about you, after all, Sallie!”

“Oh! I’ll be jest awful good to ye, Phil, if you’ll let bygones be bygones, and stay and work for pa jest as you’ve been doing. Say! will ye?”

“I can’t agree to that,” said Phil. “A man who goes back on his word, and still claims to hold me in writing after what he promised you, and orders me to tend bar, and locks me up, and threatens to whale me, — I’m through with him!”

“Don’t say that!” Sallie entreated. “I’ll make it right between you. We’ve all been mad, and said things we had n’t oughter.”

“I’m not mad now,” Phil replied; “and what I say I mean.”

"Oh, no, Phil! Think it over! Shall I go away, so you can put on your good clo'es again?"

Phil did not intend to put them on at all, being unwilling that Bass should have even so small a claim upon him as that; but he thought it discreet to answer, —

"I suppose, if you go, you will turn the key on me again."

"No, I won't," said Sallie; "not if you'll promise not to run away."

"I'm not going to run away," said Phil. "I may go out of the house, but I promise not to leave the village."

"I know you're a feller of your word, Phil," said Sallie, sweetly, as she retired, leaving the door unlocked.

Returning in a little while, she was startled to find that he had disappeared, but, seeing the good clothes on a chair, she said to herself, —

"He ain't gone fur without them! He's a feller of his word, Phil is!"

As the doctor, who had brought Phil through his fit of sickness the year before, returned home from visiting his patients that morning, he met that young person, with a small bundle under his arm, coming in haste to his door.

“Well,” said he, inquiringly, “what’s new to-day, Phil? You look excited. Feverish?” taking the boy by the hand and feeling his pulse. “Get your breath, and come in and talk.”

“Perhaps I’m a little excited,” said Phil, as they entered the doctor’s office together; “but I don’t need any medicine: I’ve come on business.”

“On business!” the doctor repeated, sitting down and motioning him to a chair. “Well?”

“My father went away a year ago,” said Phil, “owing you some money for attending on me when I was sick.”

“A small sum,” replied the doctor, with a smile. “Never mind about that.”

“I’d rather mind about it, Dr. Mower, if you please.” Phil played nervously with the arm of the big chair he had sunk into. “I’d like to work out that debt, if you have anything for me to do.”

“You! Work it out!”

“Yes, sir. I’ve always meant to pay you in some way, and now I have a chance, provided you have anything for me to do.”

The amused smile with which the doctor regarded him changed to one of interest and sympathy.

“I thought you were at work for Sol Bass.”

“I have been till to-day; but I’ve got sick of the



“ Oh! I'll be jest awful good to ye, I'hill, if you'll let
by gones be by gones ” [p. 82].



“ The paper he claims to hold you by isn't probably worth *that*, snap-
ping his fingers ” [p. 86].

Bass tribe, and I believe I've worked out my father's debt to him."

No careful observer of symptoms, like Dr. Mower, could fail to notice the surge of feeling which the boy was trying to keep down.

"You're having some trouble. What is it, Phil? I rather think you'd better tell me all about it."

This was said so kindly that the boy, who had felt himself utterly friendless a few minutes ago, burst into tears.

"That's right," said the doctor, encouragingly. "Open the safety-valve. There, my boy! Now you're all right. Let's hear about Sol, — or Sallie, — which is it? Sol or Sal?"

Phil could not help laughing, even while he stifled his last sob.

"It's both," he said. "I'd like to tell you all about it, if you will let me, and get your advice."

"Well, begin at the beginning," said Dr. Mower.

So Phil told all about his being pledged for his father's debt to Bass, how he had worked faithfully for a year in the hope of paying it off, and how he had just now quit that thankless service. He did not get through without more than one sob and gust of tears.

The doctor leaned back in his chair and nodded

with half-shut, contemplative eyes; then he put a few searching questions; then he said, in answer to one from Phil, —

“No, my boy. I don’t think Bass has the slightest claim on you, — or ever had, for that matter. The paper he claims to hold you by is n’t probably worth *that*,” snapping his fingers. “But Bass is a dull-witted, obstinate blockhead, and he may make you trouble. I think I’d better see him.”

“I wish you would,” said Phil, overjoyed. “And if you have something for me to do —”

“I’m sorry to say,” Dr. Mower replied, “I’ve a man engaged to take care of my horse and cow and do all my summer’s work. But I’ve an idea for you, Phil. You know Krennidge, of course.”

“Jo Krennidge?” said Phil. “The teamster? I see him about every day.”

“Apply to him. But go first to Mrs. Shedrick, and explain to her and her boarders why you could n’t drive for them this morning. Say you hope to get another place, and ask if they will order their teams of Krennidge provided he employs you.”

Phil’s face brightened. “I see!” he exclaimed. “I am sure I can carry their custom over to any man who has teams. They’ve been Bass’s best patrons.”

“But first, Phil, you really need better clothes for

whatever business you think of trying. Was there anything else to fit you where Bass bought that suit?"

"Yes; there was a suit I liked even better, but as it cost a dollar more, he would n't buy it."

"A dollar more," said the doctor. "That makes twelve dollars." He opened his pocket-book. "Take this, Phil, and go and get into those clothes as soon as possible."

"I can't use your money, Dr. Mower," said Phil, with glistening eyes.

"What's the reason you can't? You'll pay me some time,—and pay the old debt, too,—all the sooner for having a decent suit of every-day clothes to appear in. Don't think *I'm* going to get a mortgage on you by the means. It's just a loan. I believe you are an honest boy, and I trust you."

"I did n't think you would talk to me in this way. I did n't think anybody would," said Phil, with a gulp of grateful emotion.

"Now, go," said the doctor; "and come back here to dinner. But hold on! Here's the man I was to see. All the better."

"Shall I go?" whispered Phil, casting an anxious glance from the window.

"No, sit down; we may as well have it out with

him now. Ah, come in! Come in!" cried the doctor, raising his voice, as the face of Solomon Bass, more puffed and empurpled than ever with haste and rage, appeared at the open door. .

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. BASS'S ABSURD CLAIM.

“**H**UH!” said Solomon, giving Phil a lowering look. “You here, be you?”

“What’s wanting, Mr. Bass?” inquired the doctor.

“I want that boy,” growled Solomon. “Did n’t you tell Sal you would n’t run away?”

“I have n’t run away, and I’m not going to,” replied Phil. “I told her I would n’t leave the village, and I have n’t left the village.”

“Come along back with me!” And Solomon advanced to lay hold of him.

“That’s another thing,” Phil exclaimed. “I told you I had done with you, and I meant it. Don’t take hold of me!”

“Hands off, Mr. Bass,” said the doctor. “You’ve no more right to this boy than the man in the moon.”

“You mean to say —” began Bass, fumbling in his breast-pocket. “Look a’ this paper!”

“I’ve heard about that. Let me see it.” The doctor took it and examined the writing with a

curious smile. "You're a stupider man than I thought, Solomon Bass, if ever you imagined such a paper as that worth the ink it was written with."

"What's the reason 't ain't?" cried Bass.

"In the first place, it is not in proper form, as any lawyer will tell you. In the next place, the terms of it are absurd; a court would set them aside at once. A man can apprentice his son, or bind him to work for another, under certain legal sanctions; but he can't sell him in this free country, or pledge him as security for a debt, by giving any such note of hand as that. Farlow knew it, if you did n't. I advise you to burn that up, Solomon," — Dr. Mower handed back the paper, — "and not expose your ignorance by showing it to people."

"I am an ignorant man," said Solomon, "and I don't know much about what you call legal sanctums. But that paper is plain enough for a fool to understand. It was wrote by the boy's own father, and it gives him to me till the hundred dollars is paid. That's all I know, and that's all I care for. Come along, I tell ye!"

He grasped Phil's collar. Phil clung to the chair. The doctor advanced and laid his hand firmly on Sol's wrist.

"If you commit an assault on this boy, Solomon

Bass, I'll have you prosecuted. If you think you have a right to him, there's only one way to enforce it, — appeal to the law, don't break the law."

"Think I'm going to give up my claim?" cried Bass.

He loosened his hold on Phil and turned on the doctor, who answered with cool deliberation. "I rather — think — you are. You've somebody besides a boy to deal with now, you've a man, — name Dr. Mower, — pretty well known in these parts. Phil has placed himself under my protection, and I give you fair warning, that if you lay violent hands on him again I'll have a warrant out for you so suddenly it will make your head swim."

"I'll have my rights, in spite of you!" roared Solomon, "if I have to go to law."

"That's just what I advise you to do," said the doctor. "But the law's a double-edged tool. Try it with him, and I'll try it with you. I'll have myself appointed his guardian, and sue you for his wages the past year."

"Sue me — for his wages?" stuttered Sol, amazed.

"Precisely. He more than paid his board by working for you during the three months he went to school, and he has done almost a man's labor the rest of the time. He was under no obligation to work

out his father's debt, and you owe him a hundred dollars."

This view of the case seemed to stagger Mr. Bass. Phil listened with thrills of joy while the doctor went on:—

"Even if that was a legal agreement between you and his father, the court would set it aside, on the ground that yours is no fit place for such a boy. How much money has he actually paid out for you, Phil?"

"Besides the suit of clothes he gave me and then took away again, he has just bought me this pair of shoes," — Phil put out his feet, — "that cost three dollars. Everything else I have has been picked up one way or another,—given me by boarders, or bought with money given me by people I've taken to ride."

"I see! And you have n't been able to keep all the neckties that have been given you, either," said the doctor, with a smile. "You see how it is, Bass."

"I don't know why you should interfere in my business," replied Sol, rolling from one leg to the other excitedly. "Anyhow," shaking his fist at Phil, "you better come with me 'thout more fuss. You'll be sorry if ye don't. I'll foller ye up, I'll dog ye, I'll have my money's wuth out of ye somehow. Will ye come?"

As Phil firmly and respectfully declined this not very tempting invitation, Bass went off mumbling revengefully.

"We've a numbskull to deal with," remarked the doctor, "and we must look out for him. Don't go on the street till he is well out of the way. Let him get over his mad fit."

"I don't know what I should do, if it was n't for you!" Phil exclaimed, in another outburst of gratitude. "Would you really sue him for my wages?"

The doctor laughed. "I don't know. It's well enough for him to think so."

"If he would only accept my work in payment of my father's debt, that's all I would ask," said Phil.

"But he does n't accept it. He still has an idea that he owns you, and I don't quite see how we are to beat that out of his head. It might have saved trouble," Dr. Mower continued, with his face in humorous wrinkles, "if you had been contented to remain Sallie's pet, marry her in four or five years, and go into partnership with her pa. How would that have suited you?"

"Oh!" Phil ejaculated, with a shuddering laugh. "It was ever so long before I would believe that was their plan."

“Sallie’s a smart girl, and it seems to be a good business,” chuckled the doctor. “Many a boy would have jumped at the chance.”

“I’m not that sort of a boy,” said Phil, his excitement passing off in good-humor. “If there was millions in the business, and Sallie was six or seven times as smart and sixty or seventy times as pretty, I should make the same choice. I should say, ‘No, I thank ye! Not any on my plate, if you please!’”

CHAPTER XIV.

THAT SUIT OF CLOTHES.

HAVING given Bass time to get home and cool off a little, Phil started out to buy the new clothes.

To his surprise, he saw in the distance Bass going away from Mr. Minkins's store. But Bass did not see Phil. He went off homeward, shaking his head belligerently, watched by the smiling Mr. Minkins from his porch.

The worthy man had not ceased to smile when he saw Phil approach. "Hallo!" he said. "What's the row 'tween you and Bass?"

"Oh, we could n't agree." An idea occurred to Phil, and he proceeded: "I believe I've worked out my father's debt to him, and when you've something for me to do, Mr. Minkins, I'll work out his debt to you."

"Sho!" said Minkins, interested. "I sha'n't object when I have a job some time. Don't ye want to buy a suit o' clo'es?"

This question and a peculiar quirk about the Minkins mouth piqued Phil's curiosity. Although he had come for the express purpose of buying the twelve-dollar suit, he answered, carelessly, —

“I d'n' know. Why?”

“I've got just the suit you want. Le' me show ye.”

So saying, the storekeeper took from the counter behind him, and held up to view, a coat and pair of trousers, the sight of which astonished Phil very much indeed.

“Just like the other,” he began. “No!” he exclaimed. “By George, Mr. Minkins! did Bass just bring them in?”

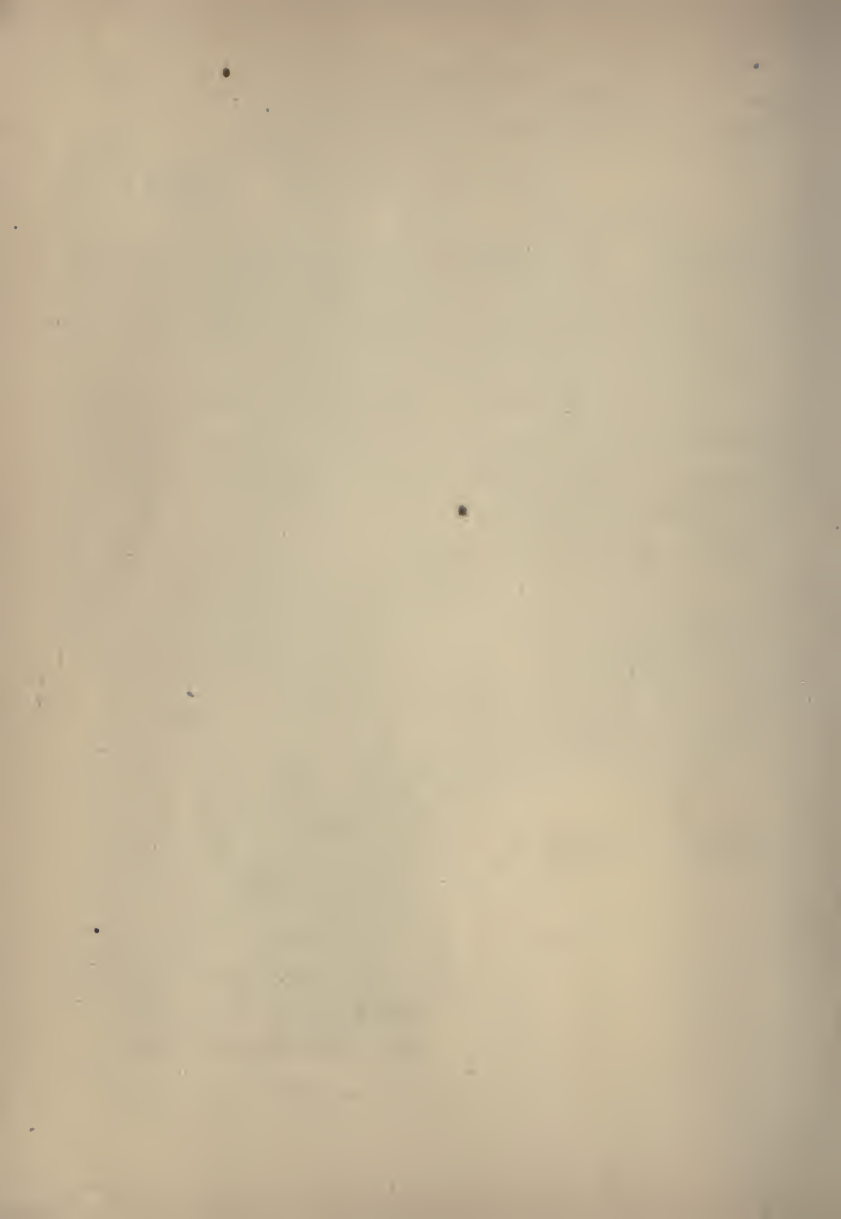
“Not ten minutes 'fore you come,” laughed Minkins. “And the maddest man he was, ever you did see. ‘Here! take these clo'es back,’ says he, ‘and 'low me what ye can for 'em.’ ‘What! don't they suit Phil?’ says I. ‘Suit him or not,’ says he, ‘Phil sha'n't have 'em; that's all there is 'bout that.’ I see he was terrible techy, but I could n't help givin' him a little rub about his tomboy, to pay 'em off for her sass. ‘Better keep 'em for Sal,’ says I. ‘Why not?’ ‘None o' your jokes with me *now!*’ says he. ‘I'm riled! Will ye take the clo'es? And what 'll ye 'low me?”



"He answered her smile with one of boyish pride and good-nature" [p. 99].



"He grasped Phil's collar" [p. 99].



Cost 'leven dollars on'y little while ago.' 'But, they've been wore, and that makes 'em nothin' more'n a secon'-hand suit,' says I. 'Can't sell a secon'-hand suit, don't care how good, for half price.' He haggled a spell; finally he said, 'Wal, I don't care! It's better'n seein' Phil ever have 'em on ag'in!'"

"Phil never wanted to have 'em on again!" said Phil, with a rueful sort of laugh. "I'm sick of everything that reminds me of Sallie and her pa."

"Sho!" replied the storekeeper. "It'll be a good joke on Bass, if you're seen a wearin' on 'em, after all. Think of his throwin' 'em right into your face, as 't were!"

"Besides," laughed Phil, "it's a second-hand suit, as you say,—nobody wants to pay much for a second-hand suit."

"You need n't pay much," said Minkins. "You may have 'em for jest what I agreed to 'low Bass."

"How much is that?"

"Five dollars,—if I can't get more."

"I'll take 'em," said Phil, promptly.

So he had the pleasure of carrying back to the doctor, with the clothes, seven dollars of the doctor's money. He was in high glee. "I'd rather have had a new suit, that Sal and her pa had never had any-

thing to do with," he said, "but I can't afford to indulge in luxuries."

The doctor gave an amused chuckle. "Well," he said, showing Phil into a back room, "get inside the clothes, then outside a slice of corned beef, which is waiting for you, and we'll see what we can do next."

After dinner Phil went with great diffidence to show himself at Mrs. Shedrick's boarding-house. He was ashamed to meet Clara, after the scene she had witnessed in the morning, and yet he was anxious to let her know that Bass had not triumphed over him.

As he was entering the yard, he saw her going with a book to a hammock swung under some trees near the house. He had, like many a sensitive, timid nature, a great deal of latent courage, which could be drawn upon in an emergency. He now drew upon it, and walked up to her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a look of surprise and interest. "How do you do?"

"I am still alive," Phil blushing replied.

She had a frank, sweet, confiding face, upon which dawned a smile of mingled sympathy and mischief, as she rejoined, —

"Have you got through tending bar?"

Phil grew more and more confident. He answered her smile with one of boyish pride and good-nature, as he said, —

“I have n't tended bar very much. I never sold a glass of liquor yet, and I never will, — and Bass knew it.”

“What did he give you such an order for, then?”

“It would be a long story, and a funny story, to explain that.”

Phil's face expressed even more than his words. Clara's curiosity was excited.

“Oh, tell it! Here's mamma! O mamma!” she cried, “Phil did n't tend bar this morning, and he has a funny story to tell about it.”

He turned and met Mrs. Chadbow bringing a camp-stool to the shade of the trees. His first honest impulse was to tell the whole strange history of his present situation; yet he shrank from exposing his father's weakness and dishonesty of character. He shrank, also, he hardly knew why, from betraying — for it seemed to him that it would be betraying — the amazing folly of Miss Bass's conduct.

In seeking the doctor's counsel and assistance, he could talk seriously of Sallie's partiality for him, and of her fearful fits of anger; but how could he

here and now confess that it was her preposterous jealousy of Clara and her fury at sight of the necktie which had caused a catastrophe in his life and fortunes ?

That sense of honor which belongs to true manly natures taught Phil at fifteen that a certain loyalty was due even to a selfish and ridiculous passion, which he had never encouraged and could not respect.

So he answered, after some hesitation, —

“I could n't tell half ! All I've come to say now, Mrs. Chadbow, is, that I have left Mr. Bass, and to ask if you would still like to have me drive for you, if I can get another place, which I am thinking of.”

“I don't know why not,” Mrs. Chadbow replied, regarding him with a sort of motherly concern. “I'm glad you've left that man. Where are you going now ?”

“I have n't decided. I hope Mr. Krennidg will give me a chance to drive, if you will order your teams of him. But I must find a place to live.”

“Why not come here ?” the lady inquired.

“Oh, I could n't afford that !” said Phil. “That is, not unless Mrs. Shedrick can give me something to do towards paying my board.”

Thereupon Clara spoke up with enthusiasm, —

“Why, mamma, how strange! She has said two or three times lately that she ought to have a young man about the place, and that she would n't begin another season without one.”

“I believe you are just the boy she wants,” said the mother, benignantly. “I'll speak to her about you. Meanwhile, go and see this Krennidge, and if he will hire you, and you can get a horse and two-seated wagon for this afternoon, bring them back with you.”

CHAPTER XV.

NEW HOPE AND A NEW HOME.

PHIL started off filled with happiness and hope at the kindness of these friends and his brightening prospects.

He found Krennidge at his stable, waiting for custom.

"How's business?" he asked.

"Fair to middlin'," said Krennidge, picking up a water-pail.

"Don't you want to hire a man?" Phil inquired.

"Can't say as I do," replied the teamster, walking to a pump in the yard. "Where's the man?"

"Well, a boy, then," said Phil. "I am the boy."

Krennidge had begun to pump, but he stopped and looked at him with fresh interest.

"I thought you was drivin' for Bass."

"So I was; but I have left him. Some of his customers have left him, too; and they'll order

their teams of you, if you'll give me a chance to drive for 'em. They want a horse this afternoon."

This was touching Krennidge in a tender spot. He had noticed, not without concern, that Phil, boy as he was, seemed to have more constant employment than any other driver; and the idea of obtaining, through him, some of Bass's flourishing business was a great temptation.

"Season 'bout over, — don' know as I want to hire, anyway, — can't say for sure. Of course," he concluded, "if you can bring me orders, I can mabby 'ford to take ye. How much do ye want?"

"A dollar a day," said Phil, courageously.

"A dollar a day, for a boy like you!" exclaimed Krennidge. "Ruther guess not!" and he returned to his pumping.

"Very well," cried Phil, independently. "Then I'll go and see Scoville."

As Scoville was the other teamster, doing a small business of his own, Krennidge dropped the pump-handle again with remarkable alertness and called the boy back.

"Look a-here! Tell ye what I'll do! I'll give ye a dollar a day as long as there's business. When there ain't none, I won't give ye noth'n'. How's that?"

"That's all right," replied Phil, more delighted than he dared to show. "Now give me that brown horse of yours for this afternoon, and your easiest two-seated wagon."

The horse was quickly harnessed, and he had the proud pleasure of driving up again to Mrs. Shedrick's piazza steps and waiting for the ladies.

While he was waiting, Mrs. Shedrick came out and spoke to him. As some of her boarders had gone, she could give him a room; and would he really like to come there, and get wood and water and do other chores, by way of paying for his board?

"It's just what I would like!" exclaimed Phil.

She was a kind, elderly lady, with a pale, amiable, care-worn face. Phil had always liked her; she liked Phil; and it took but a short time for them to form an agreement to their mutual satisfaction. He was to come back there that night and make his home with her, — at least as long as her boarders remained.

Then came Mrs. Chadbow and her daughter and another lady. Phil stepped into the wagon after them, and drove off, with Clara by his side.

"Lucky they don't know anything of Sallie's jealousy!" he said to himself. "Like enough they wouldn't let her ride with me, if they did."

He was very happy. A sense of newly found freedom, the prospect of a home and a better life, added to the charm of the company he was in, filled him with a joy he could hardly contain.

The weather was fine. He took the ladies to the great woods and their lovely undergrowth of ferns, which he had been the first to show to visitors, stopping by the way at more than one waterfall and pool, or hillside commanding mountain views. Then came another exciting moment of triumph, — on the road homeward.

Having crossed Thunder Brook bridge, he drove through the village, passed Bass's hotel, and was conscious of being seen sitting once more beside the pretty Clara, dressed in the suit which had been taken from him that morning, and driving for Krennidge instead of Bass.

Yet the sensation was hardly that of triumph: Phil was too good-hearted a boy to wish to make his worst enemy feel as he knew Solomon and Sallie felt then.

It was with a deep sigh of relief and peace that he entered the comfortable little room Mrs. Shedrick gave him that evening, and said to himself, "Now I am at home."

He had plenty to do now besides driving for Kren-

nidge when he had a chance, his willingness, his quick perception, and his experience of hotel work making him a very useful chore-boy at the boarding-house. Besides assisting Mrs. Shedrick, he did errands for the boarders, and brought from the woods beautiful sheets of birch bark, which he made into baskets for the ferns he had helped the ladies gather.

“It’s too pleasant to last long, I’m afraid,” he said to the doctor, who asked him one day how he liked his new life.

Indeed, one part of it was destined to come to an abrupt conclusion.

CHAPTER XVI.

BASS'S REVENGE.

PHIL had noticed for two or three days something not quite open and friendly in the treatment he received from Krennidge, and when on Saturday afternoon he ventured to speak to him of wages due, he got an ominously glum reply.

"Don' know's I owe ye anything; Bass says I don't."

"How so?" Phil asked, changing color. "What has he to say about it?"

"A good deal, you'd fancy, by the way he talks," answered the teamster. "He says I've no right to hire ye: you belong to him; and if you earn wages, the wages belong to him."

Phil was dumb for a moment with astonishment and indignation.

"Well," he exclaimed, at length, "are you your own man, or Bass's? Are you going to do as you said, or as he says?"

"Tain't the question," replied Krennidge,

“whuther I’m Bass’s man, but whuther you’re Bass’s boy.”

“That question’s decided fast enough!” cried Phil.

“You may think it is, but he claims it ain’t. I s’pose I shall do as I said, fur as your work this week goes. I’ll pay you, even if I have to pay him over again: you’ve brought me some business, and I’d like to have ye as long as business holds out; but I can’t pay you and Bass too. I ca’c’late I owe ye four dollars for this week,” — Krennidge took out his pocket-book, — “but I can’t continner the arrangement any longer, without you first come to some sort of agreement with Bass.”

“Very well!” said Phil, firm, but excited, as he took the money. “If you’re afraid of Sol Bass, I’m sorry; I thought you were a bigger man.”

“’T won’t do no good for you to twit me that way,” said Krennidge, as he returned his pocket-book to his pantaloons. “Whuther I’m afraid or not, I know my own business, and ’t won’t pay, for the sake of a few dollars at the close of a season, to have a dispute and hard feelin’s with Sol Bass.”

“I suppose you’re right,” Phil rejoined, after a pause, swallowing a lump in his throat; “but it’s hard.”

"Kind o', I allow," said Krennidge; "but it can't be helped."

"Then I am through with you?" Phil asked, turning reluctantly away.

"I guess you be," was the response, — "without you're willin' to do the work and let Bass draw the wages."

Phil laughed bitterly as he walked out of the yard.

"Lucky there's another teamster in town," he said to himself, and proceeded straight to Scoville's stable.

He did not much like the proprietor's manner towards him when he presented himself. He liked still less the reply he received to his offer of services.

"Perhaps you've heard," said Scoville, "there's a man in town of the name of Sol Bass."

"He has been here before me!" exclaimed Phil.

"I won't deny but what I've seen him one or two times since you've been driving for Krennidge. As to hiring you after you've left them, it won't do, you see. I can't afford to have any trouble with Sol Bass." So saying, Scoville cut off all chance for further arguing the question by walking into his house. Phil gazed after him a moment, with hot and violent words struggling up from his heart. But he closed his lips against them, and went away.

He was partly consoled for these disappointments by the thought that the close of the season was at hand, and that the occupation of the drivers would be over very soon.

Then came the miserable reflection that, with other summer boarders, Clara and her mother would be going away too, perhaps never to return, or be seen by him again.

His rides with them were not quite over yet, however. Even while he was telling his story at the boarding-house, and Mrs. Shedrick and the boarders were exclaiming indignantly against the injustice he had suffered, a two-seated buckboard drawn by one horse drove up to the door.

It carried three travellers, one of whom Mrs. Shedrick knew. He had been "buckboarding" with his companions through the mountains. They were now returning from their trip, and he wished to know if she could keep them over Sunday.

"I can keep you," she said. "Come in, and Phil here will take your horse around to one of the stables."

Weary with their day's jaunt, they got down and gave the reins to Phil, with some directions about the care of the jaded beast. The boy did not like the idea of patronizing either of the stables, after

all that had happened to disgust him with the proprietors.

"I can do better than that," he said. "There's Mr Marshall's barn. He will let me put the horse in that."

Mr. Marshall was a neighbor. His barn was near by. The stalls were empty, and there was room for the buckboard.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Shedrick; "and there is all that hay you cut in making the new croquet-ground."

"If there is n't enough, I can get more, — and oats, too," said Phil.

The horse was accordingly put up in the neighboring barn, Phil acting as ostler.

"I like the looks of that boy; who is he?" said Mr. Ellerton, the owner of the animal.

So Phil's story had to be told. Then it turned out that the gentlemen were tired of buckboarding, and anxious to return to their homes and business.

"My two friends will take the stage Monday morning," said Mr. Ellerton, "and I would go with them if I could get rid of my team. Do you think I can sell it, or find somebody here to keep the horse for me till spring?"

"We are going to remain a week or two longer,"

said Mrs. Chadbow. "I should wish it might be kept for us, — if it was only a buggy, now, instead o' a buckboard!"

"Why so?" said the owner. "There is n't a buggy in the world that rides so easy, especially over rough roads, as that buckboard. The seats are broad, and it will carry five or six persons comfortably. It is very light and strong. The new-style buckboards are getting to be fashionable all through the mountains, and I wonder you don't have them here."

CHAPTER XVII.

BROWNIE AND THE BUCKBOARD.

WHEN Phil heard of this conversation he was strangely excited. The arrival of the buckboard just at that time seemed to him something more than a mere chance. He firmly believed that it would some day belong to him. He inwardly vowed it should.

He talked with the owner; he beset Mrs. Shedrick; he entreated Mrs. Chadbow to intercede for him, and he even enlisted Clara's influence.

"Of course, I have no money to pay down," he said, "but I can manage somehow to take care of the horse through the winter. I will feed him if I have to starve myself. Then you'll see what I can do another season! I shall be independent of Bass and Krennidge; and I can make him pay for himself and the buckboard in a few weeks. I know it! And I won't keep prices up so fearfully high as they have been, neither."

"Oh, won't it be fine, if you have a horse of your own!" cried the sympathetic Clara.

"If I was rich," said her mother, "I would make you a present of him."

"I don't want anybody to make me a present of him," replied Phil. "I just want a chance to buy him. See here, Mrs. Shedrick, it's a chance for you to make some money. Help me buy the horse, — you can manage it if you will, — and we will share together the profit that can be made out of him next season."

"Oh, I could n't bear to take the responsibility!" the kind-hearted but timid landlady replied. "And I advise you not to. What if he should die?"

"Every man who buys an animal has to take that risk," said Phil.

He was so full of the idea that he had to go down and talk with his friend the doctor about it. The doctor listened with half-shut, contemplative eyes, and nodded approvingly.

"It looks like a first-rate chance for you," he said. "I'll step up and see Mrs. Shedrick and Mr. Ellerton, if you like, and speak a little word in your favor."

"Oh, if you only will! It's a splendid horse and the nicest buckboard!"

Phil had already, in the new hope that possessed

him, gone to the barn two or three times and looked the animal proudly over, and examined the vehicle admiringly, as if they were already his own. The doctor now went up with him and looked at them, saying encouragingly, "Really, it looks as if it was just the thing for you, Phil."

Mr. Ellerton had become interested in the boy, and was well prepared to hear what the doctor had to say of him.

"I think myself," he replied, "the team in his hands can be made to pay for itself in a little while. The trouble will be in keeping the horse through the winter. If you, doctor, will assume a little responsibility in the matter, and see that he is well fed, I don't object to leaving him. I paid two hundred and sixty-five dollars for horse, harness, and buckboard when I started with them, and it was considered a bargain. They cost the former owner three hundred, and he had used them but a short time. Now, if the boy can pay me two hundred and twenty-dollars in nine or ten months, they shall be his. I only ask that you and Mrs. Shedrick will see that I have my property back again if I don't have the money."

"I advise," remarked the doctor, "that the property still remain in your or Mrs. Shedrick's name,

and that Phil keep his plans a secret for the present. He understands why. But two hundred and twenty-five dollars, Mr. Ellerton, is a good deal of money for him to raise."

Both looked at the boy's anxiously hopeful face, as he stood by and awaited what seemed to him a decision of his fate.

"It *is* a good deal of money for *him*," said Mr. Ellerton, with a smile; "and I don't mind. I'll make it a round two hundred. You can't find any fault with that."

"No fault at all; it is very liberal," said the doctor. "I know the boy, and I am confident that, with health and any sort of decent luck, he will pay you, and have the horse and buckboard free of all indebtedness, within a year. I think Mrs. Shedrick made a mistake in not taking a share in the enterprise. But all the better for him."

So Mr. Ellerton and his two friends went off by the stage-coach on Monday, and the horse and buckboard were left behind.

Phil had something now to console him for his misfortunes. He could even contemplate with serenity the near departure of Clara and her mother with the remaining boarders, — for did he not have his "team"?

That was what he called it; that is what a great many people, who probably know better, call a horse and wagon. Even Clara Chadbow, who was quite well educated for a girl of fourteen, would speak of *getting into the team*, when she meant *getting into the wagon*, careless of the fact that it takes more than one animal to make a team, and that the wagon is no part of it.

Every minute he could spare from his other occupations Phil now spent with Brownie, for that was the horse's name, suggested by the color of his coat. He delighted to feed and water him, to rub him down in the morning, and to bed him down at night; then he would look in on him at odd spells, just to gladden his heart by the sight of him. Brownie was the last thing in his thoughts before he went to sleep and always the first thing when he awoke, to say nothing of his excited dreams.

The "team" was useful, too. The ladies went to ride oftener than ever, — oftener than they really cared to, I suspect, so desirous were they of helping Phil pay for the hay the horse would eat during the winter.

I am afraid his head was just a little turned. He believed his future was assured; and with Brownie's reins in hand, Clara by his side, and the supple buck-

board rocking lightly over the rough roads, he was very nearly the happiest boy in the world.

He wanted everybody to know it was his team; yet he was discreet.

“Whose hoss is that you’re a drivin’ now?” store-keeper Minkins asked him one day. “And that springboard?”

“It’s just a team one of Mrs. Shedrick’s old boarders left with her the other day when he had to hurry back to town,” Phil replied. “I’m taking care of it for the present.”

“I like that kind of a waggin,” said Minkins. “No box in the way; jest a long, teterin’ board twixt the fore and hind wheels; wide seats, easy to git in and out of. Seems to me it’s jest the sort of thing our teamsters here ’d ought to have. I bet they’d be pop’lar.”

“Think so?” responded Phil, with a sober countenance and secret glee.

“I told Sol Bass so,” Minkins resumed. “But he made all sorts of fun, in his way,—it’s a kin’ of savage way,—of you and your borrowed springboard. He hates you, Phil.”

“Does he?” said Phil, coolly. “He’ll hate me more yet, maybe, before he gets through. He’s welcome!”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEW PROJECT.

WHEN the boarders were gone, and teaming for the season was over at last, Phil found that he had saved money enough to buy a load of hay, which was soon safely housed in Mr. Marshall's barn for Brownie during the winter. Brownie was at the same time turned out to get his own living for a while, at a small expense, in Mr. Marshall's pasture. There had been late summer and early fall rains, and the grass was green.

Mrs. Shedrick had not much for Phil to do now; but she had become attached to him. She was lonely in her large, empty house, and she was glad to keep him with her, for future help and present company.

Winter would have been a dull season for him, if he had been idle, — but he was not one of the idle sort.

From the first of October he had the care of Dr. Mower's horse and cow and wood-pile, at a dollar

and a quarter a week, which the doctor insisted on paying in cash, leaving the old debt to the indefinite future.

Then, besides doing Mrs. Shedrick's errands and attending to her fires, he had his own horse to feed, keep clean, and exercise in fine weather. When the roads were bare, he used the buckboard, often giving good Mrs. Shedrick a ride, or picking up some village boys he knew. When the snow was deep, he went on horseback, using a blanket for a saddle.

They were happy days. How thankful he was to be away from that dreadful tavern! He did not often meet the tomboy. When he did, she gave him very spiteful looks, — if she looked at him at all, — and no words passed between them.

He did not go to school, but procured books and pursued his studies at home, helped by good Mrs. Shedrick, who had been a school-teacher before a disastrous marriage wrecked her youth and stranded her in a summer boarding-house.

There was a peculiar tie of sympathy between them: she was a deserted wife, he was a forsaken son: and many a bright hour they passed together over his books or in confidential talk, by the winter fire, while the storms raged without.

In spring, a new project. Four or five times a

week he would go off, sometimes on foot and sometimes on his buckboard, and be gone half a day at a time, among the gorges or on the crags of Blue Mountain.

As he commonly brought home a string of trout, these trips excited little attention. So much the greater, then, was the surprise of people in general, and the wrath of Solomon Bass in particular, when his plan became known.

Mr. Minkins was one of the first in the village to find it out.

"That's a cur'us boy," said an old farmer from the mountain, named Page, warming his shins in the store one bleak April day. "Cur'us feller,—that one with the springboard."

"You mean Phil Farlow? What's he up to now?" asked the genial storekeeper.

"Hanged if I can jest make out. Fust place, he comes to me and wants to git the run o' my upper pastur' for the summer, and the right to cross my land. 'Tain't much of a pastur',—more rocks than sile, an' more stunted briers an' huckleberry-bushes, nuff sight, than they is grass; but I let my sheep nibble there.

"'That's all it's good fer,' says I. 'What do ye want on't?'

“‘I want to take my hoss there once in a while,’ says he. ‘T won’t interfere with your sheep; only, I don’t want ye to ’low no other hoss there,’ says he. An’ hanged if he did n’t agree to pay me five dollars.”

“Funny!” said Minkins. “‘T ain’t no sort of a decent pastur’ for a hoss, say nothin’ ’bout it’s bein’ so fur out of the way. But that boy ain’t no fool. He’s deep. He’s got some notion in his head. What do ye think ’t is?”

“Fust, I was jealous ’twas a gold mine. But I watched him, and I could n’t see nary sign of his sarchin’ fer gold at all. He gener’ly goes with his springboard, drivin’ ’crost my lots to the pastur’, an’ keepin’ on to the woods beyend, where there’s an old ox-team track. It’s an awful hard road, but that boy keeps to work on ’t, gittin’ the stuns out o’ the way and fillin’ the holes and gullies, till hanged if he hain’t got a track he can haul his springboard over slick enough. One wheel’s over a rock an’ out o’ the way ’fore t’ other gits along, — an’ the thing don’t git wrenched like a common wagon. But, as you say, what *can* be the feller’s notion?”

“Don’t you see?” cried Minkins. “Why, it’s as plain as day. He’s hired your pastur’ so’s he can control the travel, and git pay for the work he’s

layin' out on the road. Till now, folks have had to walk about a mile 'n' a half to git to the top of Ol' Blue, — but Phil means to haul 'em up."

"I du say! If I ain't clean beat!" exclaimed the farmer.

CHAPTER XIX.

PHIL'S INVITATION.

AMONG the earliest summer boarders that season came Mrs. Chadbow and her daughter. Great was the satisfaction of the good landlady in welcoming them to their old rooms again; greater still, if possible, the joy of Phil.

They had some eager questions to ask about his prospects, and were glad to learn that he had managed to keep Brownie in good condition during the winter.

"You shall see! you shall try him to-morrow!" he gayly promised them. "It's my invitation, understand. I am going to take you where you've never been yet."

He had grown perceptibly since they last saw him; and the expression of his eyes, the tones of voice, the frank manliness of his yet boyish manners, — everything about him showed that his life had been pure and his aspirations high. How quickly you can tell, often by a glance even, whether a youth has low

associates and idle ways, or good habits and worthy aims.

To be sure, he had his faults. An amiable self-conceit was one of them. He had come to have a vast deal of confidence in his own judgment and enterprise, and he sometimes expressed his opinions and told his plans in a way that made his friends smile. Perhaps the possession of a horse and a buck-wagon had not been the best thing for him in that respect.

But Clara and her mamma could not blame him for appearing somewhat elated when he brought his "team" around to the door the next day.

Brownie's spirited mien and glossy coat showed the excellent care he had had; the buckboard fairly shone in its polished cleanliness,—and where was there a handsomer young driver?

With Mrs. Shedrick and Mrs. Chadbow on the back seat, and Clara by his side, he drove off, passing through the village, crossing Thunder Brook bridge and taking the mountain road.

The month was June, the weather was cool, the air was clear; and the sight of the leaping brooks, the woods in their early summer foliage, and the beautiful mountains they had been away from so long, filled Clara with girlish delight and her mother

with a hardly less lively enthusiasm. Of course, their pleasure was a fresh joy for Phil.

Higher and higher they ascended the rude mountain road, until, on reaching a farm-yard, Brownie, of his own accord, turned in. Evidently he had been there before. Walking up to a gate on the farther side, he stopped, and waited for Phil to alight and open it; then entered a lane beyond, stopping again for his young master, as if he had done the same thing twenty times before.

"Where are you taking us?" cried Clara, as they rode on up the lane, which was long, and bordered by loose stone walls and banks of raspberry-bushes and elders. "Is n't it charming!"

"And see what views are opening behind us," said her mother. "This was a bright idea in you, Phil."

"You have n't seen everything yet," the proud young driver replied, touching up his horse.

At the end of the lane he opened another gate; then came the high, wild, rocky sheep pasture.

"Why, Phil!" exclaimed the timid landlady. "You never can get safely over these ledges in this world!"

"You'll see," he laughed. "Now just watch Brownie: he knows the way."

They were all interested to note how carefully and sagaciously the animal picked out his course, through hollows, around rocks, and over the tops of granite-shouldered hills. Occasionally he stopped to breathe,—or was it to let the ladies enjoy the mountain views at the most favorable points of their ascent ?

Phil walked much of the way ; and Clara got down and walked with him where the ledges were steep and rough. At length he said, as they reached the woods on the upper side of the pasture, —

“ We ’ll stop here, and give Brownie a good rest ; and, if any of you want a bit of an adventure, just come with me.”

Mrs. Shedrick preferred to remain with the wagon ; but Clara and her mother knew too well what Phil’s little adventures usually were on such excursions not to accept the offered chance.

He took them into the woods, but, instead of ascending farther, they soon began to descend into what seemed a chasm choked with thickets below. By the use of spade and hatchet here and there he had cleared a very good path, and shaped necessary footholds among the roots and rocks.

“ Hark ! ” he said, suddenly halting and holding up his hand.

“Water!” exclaimed Clara, as the music of a torrent reached their ears.

They soon escaped from the thickets and stood upon the margin of what appeared a cataract of stones, which a touch might at any moment set tumbling down into the gorge. These stones extended for two or three hundred feet up the mountain-side, and then disappeared in scattered growths of poplars and birches, which had found footing amongst them.

Below was a beetling cliff, which, as they found on reaching it, hung dizzily over the gorge.

“This is a wonderful spot!” said Mrs. Chadbow. “How did you ever find it?”

“By following the stream up into the gorge,” replied Phil. “There are pools and cascades all up through here; and just below where we stand there is a great cavern under the cliff. Will you go down to it? I’ve got a path through the undergrowth.”

“I’ll stay here,” said Mrs. Chadbow. “Clara may go.”

Phil took the girl’s hand, stepping carefully down before and showing her where to put her feet.

“There’ll be a better-worn path here, as well as a better track for the buckboard up there, before the season is over,” he said, “or I shall miss my guess.”

They disappeared among the saplings and presently stood at the mouth of the cave, where he had once stood with Sallie Bass. He looked at Clara as he had looked at Sallie then. What a difference between the two girls! And what a difference in his life now!

How long ago it seemed since he ate his broiled trout in the woods that morning, and crawled into the cavern to rest! And yet it was less than two years.

Clara, too, was much inclined to freckles,—but somehow Phil thought freckles pretty enough now.

“O mamma!” cried the girl; “it is a wonderful cavern: you *must* come down and see it.”

Phil scrambled up over the rocks and through the thickets, and presently returned, helping the mother down as he had helped the daughter before.

“O Mrs. Shedrick!” said Clara, when at length they went back to the landlady and the buck-wagon, “you don't know what you have missed! We have seen the wildest gorge, with the brook tumbling through it; and such a cavern! I have named it ‘Phil's Cavern,’—and I am going to tell everybody about it.”

“You are the prince of guides, Phil,” said Mrs. Chadbow, mounting to her seat again. “Now do we go home?”

“Not yet,” laughed Phil. “What you have seen is only a side-show. We have come a little out of our way to get at it, but we shall soon be in the main track again.”

He kept an upward course along the edge of the woods, and after a short drive came to an opening which could not be seen until just before they entered it.

“Why, here’s a regular road!” exclaimed Clara.

“It is an old ox-track, used a long while ago for hauling wood. I’ve laid out work on it this spring, I tell you!” cried Phil with satisfaction. “Brownie has been over it a good many times, but never before with a load.”

“What pleasant woods!” said Mrs. Chaldow. “This must be taking us near the summit.”

“It is to the summit we are going,” replied Phil.

“To the summit of Blue Mountain! O mamma!” And Clara clapped her hands.

“Phil, this is almost too much happiness for one day,” said her mother; while Mrs. Shedrick, who alone had known what a surprise he had prepared for them, smiled upon him as if he had been her own son.

Up, up went the road, the buckboard undulating over the inequalities and roots like a boat pitching on the waves of a swelling sea. Sometimes a wheel

almost grazed one of the slender stems of birch or maple, and now the heavy boughs of a pine-tree swept low just above their heads. Partridges flew up from the path, and squirrels chattered from the limbs. It was all a secondary growth of timber; but even this dwindled as they advanced, until only stunted firs, their dwarfish trunks hoary with lichens and moss, clung to the rocky slope. Through these Phil had found or made a way after the old ox-track had disappeared; but a broken terrace of ledges had stopped him at last.

"Now we've a quarter of a mile to climb: the team can go no farther this year," he said, when they reached that spot. "It is easy for the feet, though it would be too hard for wheels."

Clara was the first to emerge from amidst the last straggling firs and utter cries of rapture at the wonderful, blue, billowy world outspread around.

"Phil!" exclaimed Mrs. Chadbow, as he helped her up over the rocks after Clara, "this is almost equal to Mount Washington. And to think you are the first of all the drivers and guides to bring a party here on wheels!"

"That's because they are such stupid fellows," replied Phil, with his little air of pleasant self-conceit, which implied "all except me."

CHAPTER XX.

PHIL'S CAVERN AND THE SUMMIT.

PHIL did not miss his guess at all about the track to the Summit becoming well worn before the season was over. This first excursion was much talked of, and it was not three days' before he had another party to conduct to Phil's Cavern and the top of old Blue.

Clara, who had named the cave, also named the vehicle. She was helping Phil one evening write some notices to be pinned up at the post-office and all the boarding-houses, except Bass's hotel, when she asked, —

“What are you going to call it? You ought to get a taking name. Oh, I have it! *The Blue Mountain Buckboard!*” And she wrote, putting some of his own phrases in a new form: —

“TRY THE BLUE MOUNTAIN BUCKBOARD.

“The easiest riding wagon in town. To all places of popular resort, especially to the new points of interest, Phil's Cavern and Blue Mountain Summit. Prices reasonable.

“Apply to

PHIL FARLOW,

“AT MRS. SHEDRICK'S.”

"How's that?" she said, triumphantly. "How am I for a man of business?"

"Capital!" replied Phil, laughing and blushing. "But I never can post up my own name in that way, — *Phil's Cavern!*"

"But you must!" Clara insisted. "That's the name of it, and that's what you must call it in the notices. You mustn't be too modest."

"I? Too modest?" he queried. "I thought I heard a girl about your size hint something quite the reverse the other day."

"Did I? Well, you are really modest, Phil, I think," she replied, laughing; "although you are rather conceited. What do you say?" dipping her pen again.

"All right, if you think so," replied Phil, whose vanity was really tickled by the proposal, and who did not care how prominent his name was in the notices, if she would approve and write them. So copies were made and posted; and soon the *Blue Mountain Buck-board* and the *Blue Mountain Driver* — it is not certain who first gave the name to him — were the most popular vehicle and teamster in town.

The drive to the Summit and Phil's Cavern became fashionable. As he had also his share of the driving in other directions, Phil within a month

found himself in the enjoyment of all the business he and his buckboard could do,—or, rather, all that he was willing that Brownie should do. He might often have made a dollar a day more than he did if he had been less merciful to his horse.

“I could stand it,” he would say, “but Brownie has done enough. I won’t overwork him.”

The manner in which Bass and the other teamsters had combined to keep up the prices proved a good thing for the young competitor. Where he thought them too high, he did not mind carrying passengers for less than the old rates, making terms to suit occasions. For instance, the fare to the Twin Cascades and back had hitherto been seventy-five cents; and it made no difference whether the wagon conveyed two persons or ten. If Phil took but two persons, he would charge them full fare. But if he took five or six,—which his buckboard could carry comfortably over good roads,—he would charge only three dollars or three dollars and a half for the whole party. As he would sometimes make two or three such trips a day, he felt that he was doing well enough with one horse.

He would never take more than two or three at a time, however, to the Summit; and for those he inva-

riably charged a dollar and a half apiece. "It's so hard on the horse," he would say.

He could not help bragging a little. "You'll see prices lower still," he indiscreetly said to somebody, "when I've got my team paid for, and am able to put one or two more teams on the road."

That somebody repeated the remark to somebody else, who told Scoville, who told Krennidge, who told Lorson, who told Bass.

Great was the indignation of those worthies. Bass, particularly, who had been as angry all along at Phil's success as an unreasoning, brutal sort of man could well be, was now more infuriated than ever against him, and he used Phil's foolish remark like a fire-brand held at the noses of the rest.

"Think of his comin' in and cuttin' under us in this way! The boy that by good rights belongs to me, with all his work and wages! Who put him into the way o' drivin'? Who but Sol Bass, I'd like to know? And now see the airs he puts on, with his confounded buckboard! It's only a few years sence nobody but some old farmer, too poor to own any sort of wagon, would be seen ridin' into town on a springboard, — that 's what we called 'em then, — and now, bless your heart! it's all the rage! 'T won't do, boys: if he keeps on gittin' our business away and

cuttin' down prices, he'll ruin us, — or, ruther, he'll ruin you, for I've got my tavern to fall back on to. He hain't sot up no tavern, not quite yit!"

Thus Sol Bass thrust the firebrand at the said noses until he had succeeded in stirring up in the owners a passion almost as furious as his own. At the same time, much as he hated the sight of a buckboard (with smart young Phil driving it), he made up his mind to try one himself.

For four or five weeks Phil found no trouble at all in monopolizing the Blue Mountain travel. He had not only secured an exclusive right to the pasture; which everybody must pass through who drove or rode to the Summit, but he knew very well that none of the old wagons in use could stand the journey.

Some horseback parties went up by his route, and he did not object to them; but one day, descending the Summit with a party, he met Lorson driving up with another party on a buckboard.

"Ye can't have everything your own way, Sonny," said that slab-sided individual, with a malicious grin, as he crowded by.

Phil, who had turned out in the woods at great inconvenience to let him pass, answered with spirit, —

"I've hired the pasture you've just passed



1. "'How's that?'" she said triumphantly. "How am I for a man of business?" [p. 133].

2. "Parts of the skeleton of a wagon fallen to pieces" [p. 143].

through, and I've done a good many days' work making this track passable for one team, let alone my being the first to think of hauling a party up. Still I don't object to you or anybody's driving here if you will pay a share of the expense, and make the road wide enough so that two teams can meet. That's all I ask."

"He asks a heap," muttered Bass, when Lorson told him of the encounter. "Don't he and all he's got belong to me? If we'll make the road wider, for two teams to meet! Huh! He better be careful, or 't won't be long 'fore there won't be no buckboard o' hisn to meet, there or anywhere!"

About the middle of July Phil handed Dr. Mower fifty dollars, to be sent to Mr. Ellerton. He had an excellent run of business for the next ten days, at the end of which time he one evening carried the doctor fifty dollars more.

"This is n't all that's owing to me," he cried, exultantly. "At this rate, I shall have my team all paid for before the middle of August, with a chance of making a hundred or a hundred and fifty more for myself before the season is over."

"First rate! But keep your head cool, my boy," said the doctor. "Don't crow till you're out of the woods. How about our friend Bass?"

“His buckboard has been to the Summit again this week,” replied Phil. “As Lorson really takes pains to crowd me out of the track, and they won’t do a thing towards improving it, I went to Mr. Page yesterday and told him I should expect him to keep his agreement; he must n’t let any other team cross his pasture.”

“That’s right, that’s fair,” said the doctor, who had been consulted with regard to the Blue Mountain enterprise from the beginning. “What did he say?”

“He said he would stop the first team; and I hear he did stop Lorson to-day. He had to turn around with his party, without taking them to the top.”

“That’s capital!” the doctor chuckled; “but it will make Bass rearing and pitching mad!”

“I suppose so,” said Phil; “but what can he do?”

CHAPTER XXI.

WHAT BASS COULD DO.

PHIL went home from the doctor's in high spirits. His confidence in himself had been justified. His plan of reaching the Summit and securing control of the pasture had proved him a youth of ideas and strategic resources. That he now had Brownie and the buckboard half paid for, with money still owing him from patrons who would be sure to pay him and not Bass, was a fact that seemed to give solid foundation to his triumph.

"What *can* the man do?" he repeated to himself as he walked home, palpitating with joy and hope, under the midsummer stars.

He took a last look at Brownie in his stall, padlocked the barn door, extinguished his lantern in Mrs. Shedrick's kitchen, and went to bed.

His hardy out-door life made him a ready and sound sleeper, and his mind usually passed from the world of thought to the realm of dreams almost as soon as his head touched the pillow. Often he slept without waking until morning. But that night, very

strangely, he was awakened twice. First, by some indefinable noise that reached him through his open window. He lay and listened for a few minutes, when, hearing nothing more, he got up and looked out. Silence and starlight, the dim earth, and the distant murmur of Thunder Brook; no other sight or sound; so he went back to bed again.

He could not have slept long when he was awakened a second time, — not by any noise, apparently. What then could have roused him? Was it his own prophetic spirit? for it could hardly have been the faintly flickering light on his chamber wall, — a curious wavering glow, like the reflection of flames not far off. He could not see any fire from where he lay, and yet it seemed to him that there was also a soft gleam on the trees bordering the village street.

Again he went to the window, and quickly satisfied himself with regard to the origin of the light. Away on a hillside, where he remembered that some brush-heaps had been piled near a grove belonging to Mr. Marshall, there was a lively blaze.

“It seems to me a strange time of the night to be burning brush-heaps,” he said, and went to bed again.

He was up early the next morning, full of pleasant anticipations of his work and the gains it promised.

He was to take a party of three to Phil's Cavern and the Summit, and Brownie must have a good breakfast. After doing some light tasks about the boarding-house, he started for the barn, whistling with happy thoughts. As he drew near, Brownie answered with welcoming whinny and pawing feet from within.

Then Phil stopped whistling with remarkable suddenness: he had noticed something wrong about the door-fastenings, — a staple had been drawn, the hasp hung down, the padlock lay on the ground.

With a start of alarm he sprang forward and threw open the door, forgetting for an instant that he had already heard the horse stamp and whinny, and looking to see if he was still there.

Brownie was in his stall; apparently nothing had happened to him. What then was the meaning of the forced lock? Phil glanced anxiously around. The harness hung on its hooks. But the buckboard! Where was the buckboard?

He ran out wildly, uttering a despairing cry. He looked all around the yard, then hastened to Mr. Marshall's house.

Mr. Marshall came to the door half-dressed, and heard with surprise the boy's first breathless question, —

“Have you been to the barn this morning?”

"No, I've only just got out of bed," he replied. "What's the trouble?"

"The barn has been broken into, and my buckboard has been stolen!"

"Your buckboard! And the horse?"

"The horse is there."

"Then the buckboard can't be far away," said Mr. Marshall, reassuringly: "nobody would want that without a horse. It must be a foolish joke some fellows are trying to play off on you."

"It's no joke," said Phil, full of the worst forebodings. "Who burnt your brush-heaps up on the side-hill last night?"

"Nobody, to my knowledge. Are they burnt?"

"I saw the blaze. I know what it means now."

Phil hurried away to the scene of last night's fire. Mr. Marshall, following immediately, knew by his frantic gestures before he came up with him what had happened to the buckboard.

There was a desolate, smouldering heap of brands and ashes, before which Phil had paused, convulsed with grief and rage.

It was a broad, spreading heap, with a pretty well-defined boundary, beyond the circle of which lay the still smoking ends of scattered branches which the fire had not quite consumed. Among these pro-

jected the fragments—the fragments only—of a pair of shafts.

Within the circle, near opposite sides of the heap, were parts of the skeleton of a wagon fallen to pieces: just two pairs of half-buried tires, the spokes and felines mostly destroyed, one axle sticking out, with a charred piece of the iron-bound hub, and a mound of cinders where the connecting board and seats should have been.

“It’s the most monstrous outrage ever I heard of!” Mr. Marshall exclaimed. “Who could have done such a thing?”

“I know who did it, or had it done,” replied Phil. “Oh, won’t he get his pay for this! Fire is a play-thing more than one can handle!”

He scarcely knew what he said, for the anger he was in. Yet anger is hardly the word to describe his violent emotions,—bitter grief and disappointment, a burning sense of wrong, and a maddening desire for revenge.

“I thought I heard somebody at the barn about twelve or one o’clock last night,” said Mr. Marshall; “but I had no idea what was going on.”

Phil was trying to get his passion under some control.

“I heard a noise. I wish I had come out and

caught the villains at it. There must have been more than one. They hauled the buckboard up here, tumbled it over on the brush-heap, then set the fire and ran away. I'll find them out," he added, with fierce determination, — "I'll find them out and punish them, if I live."

CHAPTER XXII.

MISFORTUNES NEVER COME SINGLY.

THE news of the outrage spread quickly, causing no little excitement in the village. Not only among Phil's many friends, — it was to be expected that their indignation and sympathy would be roused. But strangers, who knew him, if at all, only by sight or name, and who cared nothing hitherto for his troubles with the other teamsters, were inspired with a sudden interest in his fortunes when they heard of the barbarous wrong.

Then if Phil had had half a dozen buckboards he could have found employment for them all; but he had not even one, — nor did he know where one could be had.

"The best way," said the doctor, whom he consulted, "will be to order one directly from the makers. I'll do it for you; and I'll hold on meanwhile to the fifty dollars I was going to send to Mr. Ellerton to-day. Collect what money is owing you; then, if you have n't enough to pay for the new wagon, I suppose I must let you have some."

"Mrs. Chadbow has already told me she would lend me what I need," said Phil. "I've got some good friends in that house," his eyes glistening with grateful tears.

"That's good. But you'd better borrow the money of me. You won't need a very large sum. Now for a description of the sort of wagon you want," continued the doctor, taking up a pencil, "for we must get off the order the first thing."

"I am going to sleep in the barn after this," said Phil, before going away, "so as to be sure nothing happens to the horse without my knowing it. I only wish I had done it before. I offered to, so that Mrs. Shedrick could let my room; but she preferred to have me sleep in the house."

"It's a good idea for you to sleep in the barn," said the doctor, "but keep still about it. Govern that lively tongue of yours, Phil, on all occasions; don't brag, don't talk of your plans, and, above all, don't threaten. Just mind your own business, keep your eyes peeled, and very likely the rascals who burnt your buckboard will betray themselves. You think you know who they are, and no doubt Bass is at the bottom of the villany; but what you want is proof."

Phil went away comforted and encouraged. He

spent two days trying to hire a wagon to fill the place of the buckboard temporarily, but met with poor success. Then came a telegram to the doctor, sent by the Buckboard Company to inform him that they had no such wagon on hand, and asking if they should make one.

"Make one?" exclaimed Phil, despairingly, when the doctor read the message to him on the street. "What's the use of that? The season is slipping away, and it will be over before ever I see a buckboard again!"

"It's a hard case," said the doctor, "but I rather think it's the best thing you can do; or, you can take a ride up through the mountains, and see if you can pick up another second-hand buckboard. Think of it over night, and let me know in the morning."

"I'll think of it," said Phil. But how could he decide?

"If I wait for a wagon to be made for me," he explained to Clara that evening, "I shall lose time, anyway. If I spend two or three days hunting for a second-hand one, and don't find it, I shall be losing so much more time. I don't know what to do."

"The more I think of it," said Clara, "the more angry I am at those mean men who burnt your buck-

board. But don't be worried, Phil; you'll come out ahead of them all, I'm sure."

Her sympathy was precious to him. Nevertheless, he was full of the torment of doubt and impatience when he left her and went to the barn, thinking he would come to some decision while giving Brownie his bed.

He was spreading the litter in the dusky stall with a rustling noise, which prevented him from hearing any other sound, when, on looking up suddenly, he saw, standing beside him at the horse's heels, the figure of a man.

He was startled by the apparition, coming upon him so mysteriously. It was not so dark but he could see that his visitor had some at least of the characteristics of a tramp, — shabby garments, a battered hat, and a bristling, uncleanly beard.

"Hallo!" said the boy, sharply, with a step backward. "What do you want?"

"Phil, my boy," answered the man, doubtfully, "is it you?"

If he had given him a blow, Phil could not have been more hopelessly stunned and dizzied for a moment. He stood gasping and trembling, unable to take in the magnitude of this new calamity which had rushed upon the heels of his other troubles, when the visitor went on, —

"It *is* you, I see! But how you have grown! They told me I would find you here. Well, I am changed, too, my boy. You hardly know me yet."

"Oh, yes! I know you," faltered Phil, utterly miserable, when he felt that he ought to be glad. "Who told you I was here?"

"The folks at the boarding-house, — a lady and a girl on the piazza. How are you prospering, my boy?"

Phil did not answer. He had a feeling of deathly cold and faintness at his heart. It was an aguish hand which the shabby visitor had somehow got hold of and was pressing affectionately.

"This is n't a very cordial welcome you are giving your father," he said, sadly, as he dropped the unresponsive palm.

"I can't help it," said Phil. "I did n't expect you. I don't see why you have come."

"Do you think I have no affection for my own flesh and blood?" replied Farlow, in a pathetic voice.

There was only the ghost of his old pleasant, airy manner left. He appeared very weary. Phil had never dreamt of seeing him again, so dingy and so broken. He was touched; yet he could not help answering, coldly, —

"I have n't had much reason to think you cared for me."

"I know you have n't," Farlow admitted, with something like his old engaging frankness. "I have been coming for you, or sending for you, any time these past two years; but somehow I never could strike a genuine streak of luck."

"I never expected you would," said Phil; "but I never expected this."

He looked with undiminished dismay at his father, who seemed to him to have grown shorter by half a head while deteriorating in other ways. It is certain that Farlow did not bear himself so jauntily upright as formerly. But the difference was chiefly in Phil, who had grown tall.

"Of course you did n't," said the elder. "The world has been rather rough on the old fellow, my boy. But I'm coming out all right. I did n't know whether I should be able to hunt you up or not; but luck was with me for once."

The unfilial words came to the son's quivering lips, "The luck was not with *me!*" but he did not utter them audibly. He said aloud, —

"I don't see what I can do for you."

"I don't expect you to do much," said the father. "But it is a satisfaction to see you again, and know you are prospering."

"I am not prospering!" Phil exclaimed, passion-

ately, the recollection of his other woes crowding upon him. "I have n't anything I can call my own. I can't even call myself my own, since you went away."

"Why, how 's that, Phil?"

"Did n't you pawn me, pledge me as security, for your debt to Bass?"

"But that did n't amount to anything," said Farlow, as much surprised as if that little transaction had altogether escaped his mind.

"It has amounted to this," returned Phil, his voice agitated almost to sobs, "that Bass held me and had my services for a year, and has dogged me, as he threatened to do when I left him,—dogged and persecuted and ruined me at last. Oh!" he exclaimed in anguish; "and now to have you come back in this way, and say your pawning me did n't amount to anything!"

"Gracious heaven, my boy!" said Farlow, greatly disturbed, "I never for a moment supposed it would. But I see my coming is ill-timed. I won't trouble you. I'll go."

"No,—father!" said Phil, chokingly. He could not speak the name before; he had not thought he could ever speak it again. "I can't tell you to stay, for there's nothing under heaven I can do for you, as I see; and you can bring nothing but trouble to me, when I have enough already. But don't go so."

CHAPTER XXIII.

FATHER AND SON ONCE MORE.

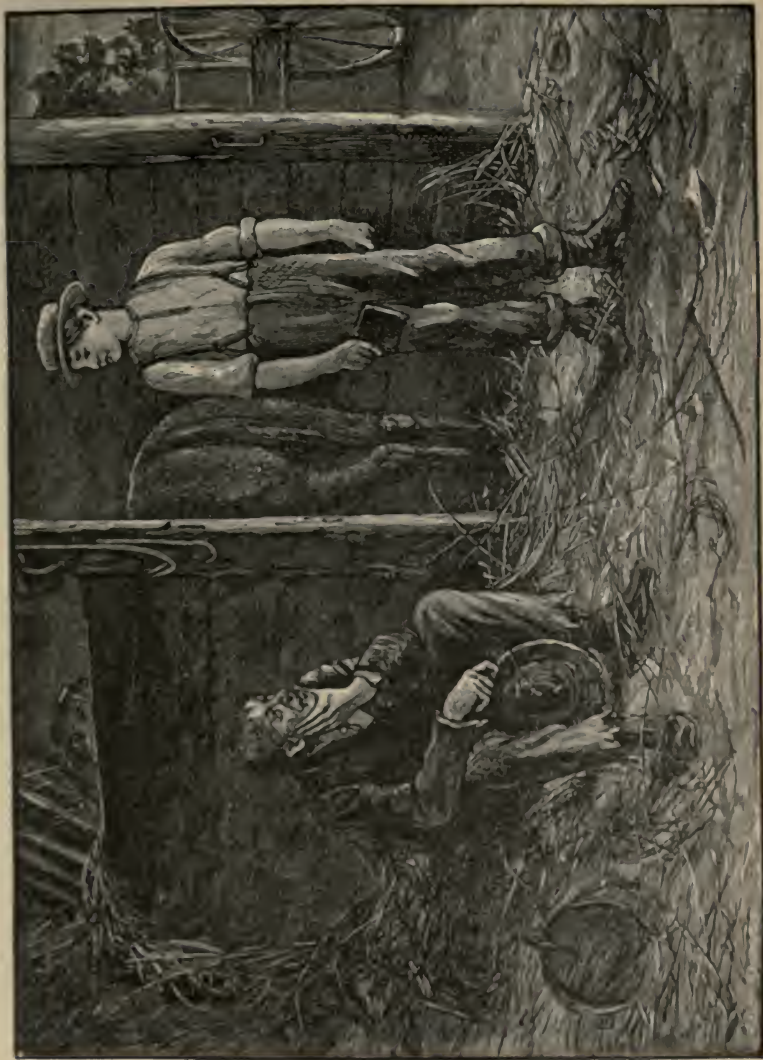
DISHEARTENING as such an invitation must have been, Farlow did not wait to have it repeated. He had looked around him in a tired fashion two or three times, and now, seeing a peck-measure by the door, he turned it up and sat down on it.

"Where have you been, and where are you going?" Phil said, watching him with mingled feelings of pity and dread, and almost sorry he had asked him to stay.

"I've just been knocking about, here, there, and anywhere, for the most of the time," said Farlow, taking out a pipe and half filling it with pinches of crumbled tobacco from his pocket. "Where I'm going, the Lord only knows."

He struck a match on the sole of his shoe, and began to puff.

"Why can't you ever settle down somewhere in some sort of business?" Phil inquired, impatiently, setting his foot on the match his father had dropped.



“‘Where have you been, and where are you going?’” [p. 152].

"I've tried it," said Farlow. "But that's easier said than done. A gentlemanly occupation is n't easy to be had; and I can't adapt myself to any other."

"A gentlemanly occupation!" Phil exclaimed, with something like angry contempt. "I'd black boots, or do any honest work, and consider it a good deal more gentlemanly than living as you do."

His father had sat down to his smoke in so contented a manner, so much as if he had left his cares behind and come to take his ease there with his boy in the dusky barn, that Phil could not help uttering this reproach.

"You always were inclined to be hard on your father," said the wanderer, peevishly. "I don't say but what I deserve it; but you might at least put off your proaching till morning."

"Till morning!" The implication that his father had really come to stay with him was appalling to poor Phil.

"Why not?" said the smoker, between puffs.

"I can't keep you till morning," Phil answered. "I have n't a bed even for myself."

"Not a bed? But you must have some place to sleep." Farlow looked up from his pipe.

"I sleep on the straw here in the barn," said Phil.

"That will do," Farlow replied, complacently.

"It won't be the first time for me, if I sleep on the straw, too. And a bite of some sort? I have n't had any supper, — nor any dinner, for that matter."

He fell to smoking again, while Phil remained silent, full of conflicting thoughts.

"What! No supper?" said Farlow, at length, as the boy made no sign.

"I'd be glad to give you *my* supper," replied Phil, with wretched hesitancy. "I'd be willing never to eat another if — if — But that is n't it."

"What is the hitch then? I see! You are not willing to take me into the house and introduce me to your friends, and say, 'This is my father!' You're wondering how you can do it."

Phil could not deny that this very thing was in his thoughts. He stood silent, his head down, his eyes on the gloomy floor, while Farlow went on, —

"Well, I don't wonder. I'm not dressed as a gentleman of my quality should be, that's a fact; and you have a right to be ashamed of my shabbiness."

"Oh, that's not it!" Phil spoke up, quickly. "I should n't be ashamed of anything about you — your clothes, or anything — if —"

"Out with it, my boy!" said Farlow, putting more refuse tobacco into his pipe.

"If you were not what you are; that's what I am

ashamed of," Phil burst forth, vehemently. "If you had come honestly by your shabbiness, as you call it, I — I think I could be proud of it."

Farlow shrugged, and struck another match as he said, —

"Then I'm to have no supper."

"I can't take you into the house," said Phil, having made up his mind on that point. "But I have n't had my supper yet. I'll get it and bring it out to you."

Farlow took a puff or two, and said, over his pipe, while he waved the match to extinguish it before throwing it down, —

"And have none yourself?"

"Does he think I can eat anything to-night?" thought the wretched boy, as, without answering, he moved towards the door.

Phil waited to see the match put out to the last spark, for the man he left sitting there on the upturned measure was so little like his father, so much like a nightmare vision of him rather, and he handled his matches so recklessly over the littered floor, that he had no more confidence in his avoiding to set the straw afire than if he had been any common tramp.

He did not wish to be seen as he entered the

house, but Clara started out from under the trees with a book her mother had sent her to bring from the hammock.

“O Phil!” she cried; “did you see that man who was asking for you? Mother thought it so strange; she said he looked so like a vagabond!”

How could the boy be true in his terrible humiliation and distress, and say, — “That man is my father!” It was impossible. So he gave the evasive answer he had already prepared for such questions.

“Yes, I saw him. He’s a man I used to see around town some time ago.”

“What did he want?”

“Something to eat, I suppose. I am going to give him something and send him away.”

“Is he waiting there in the barn? I should think you would be afraid,” said Clara.

“What is there to be afraid of?” replied Phil, with as careless an air as he could assume.

It was a common thing for him to come in late to his supper, and he found it set aside, waiting for him on the kitchen table. He pretended to eat, but slipped meat and bread and a piece of pie into a napkin on his knees, and soon returned to the barn, half expecting to find that another lighted match had in the mean while been dropped in the straw.

He found Farlow sitting where he had left him, musing in the gloom over his burnt-out pipe. He quickly knocked out the ashes at sight of Phil, returned the pipe to his pocket, and looked at the well-filled napkin with a gleam of something like avidity.

“Don’t you want to wash yourself first? Here is a pail of water,” said Phil.

“Thank you, my son, I’ll eat first, if it’s the same thing to you,” replied Farlow, extending his hand for the napkin.

He opened it and began to devour its contents in a way which made Phil glad indeed he had not taken him into the house. To witness the uncleanly habits into which he had fallen, and to see him eat so like one who had not for days tasted wholesome food, was a heart-sickening trial to the boy. How could he bear that anybody else should see and know that this was his father!

He was glad of an excuse to leave him again, when Farlow asked for drink. It was a relief to breathe the free air alone once more, for only a few minutes. To return to the barn was like going back to a prison.

“You could n’t get a drop of brandy to put into it, could you, Phil?” said Farlow, with an insinuating smile, as he took the dipper in which the water was

brought from the pump. "Or anything warming, you know, — to raise a man's spirits a trifle? Then I can talk with you."

"No, I couldn't, to save my life," replied Phil.

Farlow shrugged, took a sip of the water, and set the dipper down, saying he felt ill. He could eat no more ; the napkin, with what was left of the victuals, was falling from his lap. Phil took it away, alarmed and distressed, but saying to himself, —

"I can't get him liquor, even if he dies ; perhaps he had better die !"

"I'm a used-up man ; that's just the fact about it," said Farlow, sliding down and stretching himself out on the floor. "I've had such a tramp, coming to find you."

That was a dreadful suggestion. He had come so far, the hopelessly broken man, no doubt relying on Phil for help. How he was to help him, or even to get rid of him again, was an awful problem to the anxious son. He brought straw for his father to lie on and a bundle for his head. Farlow murmured something, and almost immediately went off in a stupor, which Phil perceived to be sleep.

"No matter what his troubles were, he could always sleep and leave somebody else to bear them," the boy said to himself, bitterly. He remembered

the last night they passed together at Bass's tavern, and said to himself again, as he said then, "How can he sleep so!"

But he was thankful for a chance to think over the situation and try to solve that frightful problem. In the mean time, he prepared his own bed of straw, shut the barn, leaving the windows open for air, and lay down in a corner.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE NIGHT IN THE BARN: THE MORNING.

GOOD sleeper as he was when free from care and happy, Phil knew there was not much rest in store for him that night. He lay listening to his father's heavy breathing, and asking himself over and over again what he ought to do, it seemed to him, for hours; and when at last he sank into a feverish slumber, from sheer weariness of body and soul, he could not have slept many minutes before he was startled by a sound.

He had lost himself, and for a brief, blessed interval forgotten where he was. He sat up, staring with fright. A small, bluish-green, sputtering flame was the only object visible in the darkness. It was not much larger than a pea, and it shed scarcely a halo around, — a flame without light, but it blazed up presently, increasing in brightness, and by degrees a hand holding a match became visible; then a stub of a pipe, held by another hand, started out of the black shadows, with a rough-bearded mouth and a haggard

face, half illumined. A strange and terrible picture in the surrounding gloom, — terrible, indeed, to poor Phil, called back thus suddenly to the reality of his situation.

He believed the litter on which his father lay must surely get a spark, and he was going to shriek out, but was restrained by the thought that any sudden disturbance might as soon precipitate as prevent the catastrophe. So he waited, spellbound with fear, and saw a part of the thin bright coal at the burnt end of the match actually fall into his father's lap. Then all was dark again, except for a fitful glow in the pipe-bowl as the puffs were drawn.

Still the boy did not speak. He could only wait in anxious horror to see the pipe smoked out and extinguished, wondering, meanwhile, that any man could be so criminally careless, and inwardly vowing that he would never endure another such night.

"Even if I did n't think of myself and the horse," he reflected, "I have no right to expose anybody's barn to such a risk."

After his smoke, which was luckily attended by no dangerous consequences, Farlow slept again. As for Phil, he no longer dared to sleep. He lay awake in tortures of anxiety, tossing in his straw until the morning light shone in at the windows of the barn.

Then Farlow stirred again. Phil waited to observe what he would do; but when, in that early twilight, he saw his father scraping the bottom of his pocket for tobacco dust enough for another pipe, he could restrain himself no longer.

“I can’t have you smoking here!” he said, springing up. “I’ve stood it as long as I can. If you want to smoke, you must go out of this barn.”

“Hallo, Phil!” said Farlow, turning the pocket-lining out into his palm. “Is it your barn?”

“No; but I am in charge; I am trusted to take care of it. You can’t light your pipe on the straw many times, as you have been doing, without burning us up.”

“No danger.” Farlow blew the dust out of his hand and put up his pipe again. “I can’t smoke if I try; I’m out of tobacco. Can’t you get me some?”

Phil was too much exasperated by this question to make any reply to it. He threw open the barn door, and then went for relief to the whinnying horse. After a while, with his heart almost too full for words, he turned to his father, who sat on his bed feeling his beard and running his fingers through his hair.

“I ain’t so clean shaved as I used to be,” Farlow was saying. “It would improve the old fellow’s ap-

pearance, Phil, if you could give him a little money for the barber."

"How much do you want?" said Phil, putting his hand promptly into his pocket.

Farlow read his thoughts, and answered with a dismal sort of laugh, —

"You seem ready to do anything to get rid of me in a hurry. Don't be anxious; I'm not going to trouble you long."

"Father," said Phil, after a struggle with his rising heart, "I've thought of a good many things overnight, while you were asleep. I want to do my duty by you, and say only what I ought to say."

"Oh! The sermon is coming, is it?" said Farlow, showing his teeth like a beast in his lair.

"Call it what you please," replied Phil; "it is time for us to come to an understanding. I can't stand another such night."

"Who has asked you to?" cried Farlow, snappishly.

"Nobody asked me to endure what I did last night," answered the boy; "but I had to. And I can't tell what may happen, now you have once come back. I have n't any home to offer you; and I should be afraid if I had, while you are so careless with your pipe and matches. If you could only

change your habits and go to work I would stick by you, and help you every way I could."

Farlow shrugged. "It's too late for that. If I only had a little money to give me a fresh start," looking wistfully at the pocket-book in Phil's hands, "I could make my way."

Phil knew well enough that giving him money would be useless for any permanent practical good; but what else could he do?

"I'll give you all I have. Here's nine dollars."

Farlow looked somewhat disappointed; having heard that Phil was prospering, he undoubtedly expected more. Yet he took the money, saying, as he got upon his feet, —

"Nine dollars is a small sum to freshen up a man in my condition and set him on his legs again, but it will do for a beginning. I shall strike a streak of luck." And he smilingly stuffed the bank-notes into his tobacco-soiled pocket.

"Don't go to Bass's bar-room with it," pleaded Phil.

"Think they would know me there? I don't. Not a soul in the village recognized me last evening, — and I spoke to two or three."

The son could see thirsty anticipations of the tavern in the father's brightening face. He deter-

mined to get him past that danger, and also, if possible, prevent his presence in the village from being discovered.

"I'll harness up and take you a few miles over the road," he said.

"All right," said Farlow. "I'll walk along, and you can overtake me and pick me up."

"No!" Phil insisted, knowing too well what that meant. "Wait, and start with me."

"You would send me off at this hour of the morning without any refreshment?"

"You can stand it, if you ride. I'll take you to a place where you can get a good breakfast. Besides, there's a part of the supper you left last night."

Seeing that the boy was determined, Farlow yielded. Brownie was soon harnessed to the rather shabby borrowed wagon which had taken the place of the burnt buckboard for a day or two, and, with his father safe on the seat beside him, Phil drove off. It was still early; few people were astir. Avoiding the main street, he took a by-way and got out of the village, as he hoped, without being seen.

In about two hours he returned, alone, and feeling as if he had been guilty of a dreadful sin. While his reason told him that it was impossible to keep his father with him, something in his heart would whisper,

“Ought I to have let him go? How could I let him go?” Yet he could not wish him back. On the contrary, since their parting, he had cast more than one look of shuddering fear behind, and in his heart was an ever-growing dread that his father might reappear at any time and blast his life.

CHAPTER XXV.

MRS. CHADBOW MAKES A DISCOVERY.

FORTUNATELY, no questions were asked at the boarding-house regarding Phil's morning ride, and no mention was made of his strange visitor of the night before.

To only one confidential friend and adviser could he unburden his heart. To the doctor, when he went to talk with him about the buckboard, he told all.

"You did just right," the doctor said, in reply of the boy's miserable self-accusations, "except, perhaps, in one thing,—you ought not to have given him any money."

"How could I help it?" said Phil. "If he had been any strange tramp needing help, I should have wanted to do something for him,—and he is my own father!"

"Of course, of course. Nobody blames you. But, having got money of you," continued the doctor, "he will be all the more certain to come back. He will

keep coming as long as he can get something out of you."

"I suppose so," murmured Phil.

"Give him a little, if you must, but don't give him much at a time. It would be better if you could have nothing whatever to do with him. You can't do him any good, and it is n't right that he should drag you down in his ruin. He'll do it, if you let him. You could ill afford that nine dollars, Phil."

"I know it. I don't suppose I can order a buckboard now, anyway," said Phil, discouraged.

"On the whole," replied the doctor, "considering that the season will be nearly over before you could probably get one, perhaps it will be as well for you to worry through with the wagon you have, or a better one if you can procure it; then in the fall or winter you can no doubt pick up a second-hand buckboard somewhere, at a low price, and be prepared for another year. Ellerton will be easy with you, under the circumstances."

"I was going to pay him up, and have something left for myself in the fall," said Phil, recalling his baffled hopes. "It seems as if everything was against me all at once."

"Oh, not quite everything," said the doctor, cheerfully. "But you are meeting with obstacles, just as

everybody must expect to in this world. The way to fortune is not so smooth as you were beginning to believe. And I'm not sure but it's a good thing for you to have found it out thus early. Sudden, uninterrupted success is never the best thing for a boy like you, Phil ; did you know it ?”

“It seemed to me a pretty good thing,” replied Phil, with a smile of rather gloomy humor. “I did n't find any fault with it.”

“But you will be a broader, wiser, larger-hearted man for these very troubles you have to grapple with if you meet them in the right way and triumph over them, — or at least deserve to triumph, which is better still. Your character will be developed and strengthened by them ; and, after all, character, and not success, is the main thing to be thought of in this life. On the whole,” the doctor added, with a pleasant half-smile, “it won't do you any hurt, my boy, to have a little of the conceit knocked out of you.”

“But the meanness of people !” Phil declared ; “such an outrageous thing, for instance, as burning my buckboard ! That rouses something in me which I don't believe does anybody any good. It makes we want to kill the men who did it !”

“That's a natural feeling ; but you must overcome it. You must learn to expect selfishness and

injustice from the majority of mankind. They act according to their nature, — just as bears and wolves do. Can you really blame the bear and wolf for being as they are?”

“Maybe not; but I want to kill them all the same.”

The doctor gave his amused chuckle.

“If only for your own sake,” he said, growing serious again, “you must n’t do the killing with revengeful feelings. I hope Bass, or whoever did that thing, will get properly punished for it, for I believe in justice. But as for you and me, Phil, we must learn to have charity, even for our enemies, and practise a little the old-fashioned doctrine of returning good for evil.”

Phil went off feeling better after this talk. Fortunately he had occupation to distract his mind. The wagon he had was a poor affair; yet his friends continued for some time to employ him, partly, perhaps, to show their sympathy for the wrong he had suffered. Then, as the days went by and he heard no more of his father, his hope that he would keep away grew strong, and his dread of him became less.

But the misfortunes of our friends soon get to be an old story with us, and sympathy with the driver will not long ease the discomfort of a hard-riding

wagon. Phil's patronage gradually fell off ; so that, by the time he had hoped to have his horse and buckboard paid for, and money of his own in pocket, he found himself still seventy dollars in debt, with only a wretched vehicle he was paying two dollars a week for, and a failing business.

Then, to his wrath and amazement, he learned that Bass had got a new, three-seated, two-horse buckboard on the road.

"I set the fashion of buckboards here," he said to Minkins, who told him that interesting fact. "And now he has burnt mine and got two of his own!"

"Did you know," Minkins continued, "he's been haulin' parties to the Summit and the Cavern — *your* cavern — for the past week or more?"

"No!" exclaimed Phil, at first incredulous, then stung to fresh fury by this added wrong. "Page promised me he would stop that."

"He did stop it. But he says Bass claimed 't you was bound to him, and had n't no right to make an independent bargain. I guess he tickled Page's fingers with a little money, too; an' that opened the gates to his teams. So, ye see, all you've been doin' up there's been jest for Bass."

This was more than Phil could bear.

"Talk of having charity for our enemies after this,"

he muttered to himself, as he hurried from the store, "and returning good for evil! I can't, and I won't!"

If a feather was wanted to break the back of Phil's patience at this time, it came when Mrs. Chadbow, wishing to make another trip to the summit of Blue Mountain with some lately arrived friends, made it on Bass's new buckboard.

It was more than a feather. He could not very well blame her; for there were seven in her party, and his own hired wagon, besides being too weak to stand the wrenches it would get on the rocky slopes, would carry with comfort not more than three or four; nevertheless, when he saw Clara and her mother ride away behind the slab-sided Lorson on that fine, three-seated buck-wagon, and heard their laughing voices, he felt that they had quite forgotten him and his wrongs, and gone over to the enemy.

He had no orders that day, and little to do, therefore, but to brood over his woes, which is not a healthy thing for any boy. He avoided speaking with Clara and her mother on their return at night, but retired early to his bed in the barn, and shut himself up to consider desperately what he should do.

"Phil really feels hurt; I am so sorry!" Clara said to her mother, as they entered their room together.

"I know he does," Mrs. Chadbow replied. "I am sorry, too; but I don't see how we could help it. We had to go with our friends; and, as he could n't take us, he has really no cause to complain."

"Of course not," said Clara; "but it must have cut him. I did n't think of it much at the time, or I would have stayed at home."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed her mother. "The truth is, we have made too much of Phil. He is a bright, honest fellow, and I would do anything to help him. He has been shockingly ill-used. But he must n't think, because we have befriended him all along, that we are always going to sacrifice our own convenience and the wishes of our friends, in order to champion him."

"That is true, mamma." Clara sighed as she sat down by the window. "But I pity him, alone over there in the barn." She looked across the moonlit street at the silent, gloomy building farther up, and listened to the crickets' lonesome notes. "The same men who burnt his buckboard may come for his horse any night. I should think he would be afraid."

"Yes, he is young to go through with such things," said Mrs. Chadbow, taking down her hair before the glass. "He is a brave boy, certainly. I should n't want to be in place of the men, if he

catches them. But come, my dear, you must go to bed."

Despite her sympathy for Phil, Clara was soon sleeping soundly. Nor was she awakened when, an hour later, her mother got up, having been startled from a light slumber by sounds which seemed to come from the direction of Mr. Marshall's barn.

"Can those men be trying to get in again?" Mrs. Chadbow said to herself, after listening a few moments at the window. "Or did I dream that I heard low voices and something like the rattling of a door?"

Whether the sound was real or imaginary, it had ceased. There was a cloud over the moon, but it was not dark; and now, gazing intently, she was sure she could see a figure gliding away from the barn.

"Can it be Phil going out at this time of the night? Poor fellow! I suppose he could n't sleep."

The figure (she was certain it was Phil) disappeared in the shadows of the street; and having waited a few minutes to assure herself that there was to be no more disturbance, she went back to bed.

She was once more asleep, and it must have been near midnight when not only she, but Clara also, and all the inmates of the house, were roused by wild cries.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FIRE.

THEY were cries of fire! Somebody ran by the house, shouting the alarm in those wild accents which have so terrible a sound, breaking upon the silence of the night. At the same time a bell raised its iron clamor; and in a few minutes the whole village seemed to be running and shouting.

The overcast sky was lurid with a fiery glow when Mrs. Chadbow looked from the window. She feared first that Mr. Marshall's barn had been fired, but a glance showed her that that was safe. The fire was much farther off than that, notwithstanding the light it gave, shedding a ruddy tint over the whole street.

"Where is it?" cried Clara, coming to her mother's side; and that was the question every one in the house appeared to be asking.

"It's in the direction of Bass's hotel," somebody called down from the skylight. "It's a tremendous blaze!"

Some of the boarders had dressed and were going out.

“Oh, let’s go, too!” Clara exclaimed; and, carried away by the general excitement, her mother consented.

“Where’s Phil? If he was only here to go with us!” she said.

“You may be sure he’s at the fire before this,” Mrs. Chadbow replied; and so indeed they found.

They had joined a group of spectators at a safe distance from the burning building, — which proved to be a barn belonging to the hotel, — when Clara saw, farther down the lighted street, the face she sought.

Phil must also have seen his friends; but perhaps his recent resentment made him still wish to avoid them, even at a time like that. He was retiring behind the crowd, when she ran towards him, calling, “Phil! O Phil! Mamma is looking for you.”

At that he came towards her, not at all in his usual frank and cordial way, but with an agitation and embarrassment which he tried in vain to conceal.

“We wanted you to come with us,” she said, returning with him to her mother. “We went over to the barn to find you, but it was all dark and still.”

“I heard the alarm, and it did n’t take me long to



“It may have been set by the other tenmasters, — jealous of his buckboards, you know” [p. 177].

“A figure gliding away” [p. 174].

run out," he replied. "I did n't think any of the ladies would want to come to the fire."

"How did it take?" Mrs. Chadbow asked.

"How should I know?" returned Phil.

"Perhaps the same way the brush-heap took that burnt up your buckboard," said Clara.

"What do you mean?" said Phil, giving her a quick glance.

"It may have been set by the other teamsters, — jealous of his buckboards, you know"; and Clara laughed.

"I should n't wonder," he replied, with a ghastly sort of smile. "I believe they're bad enough."

"I wonder if the buckboards were in the barn?" she continued; "or if they took the trouble to put them in before they set it afire?"

"Hush, Clara!" said her mother, severely.

"I was only joking, mamma."

"You must n't say such things, even in joke."

"If the buckboards had been in the barn," said Drigson the tailor, his shining face gleaming excitedly over Phil's shoulder, "I guess they'd have tried to git 'em out; but they hain't got nothin' out."

"I trust there were no horses in it!" Mrs. Chadbow exclaimed.

"Probably not," said Phil: "Bass keeps his horses

in the new barn. The old barn was n't of much account any way."

"It makes fire enough to have been of some account," said Mrs. Chadbow.

"And I guess the insurance company will think it was of some account when they come to pay for 't," said the sallow tailor. "It's burnin' hay that makes that awful smudge. Too bad! Too bad! Must 'a' been sot; for there could n't 'a' been no honest fire in the barn this time o' night; and I don't believe in your spontaneous combustion."

"What are they trying to put it out for?" said Mrs. Chadbow. "They had better look out for the other buildings."

A small hand-pumping fire-engine was on the spot, but the stream it threw had no perceptible effect, except to add a small cloud of steam to the huge volume of smoke.

Though not so large as Bass's new barn, it was a building of good size; and the heat it radiated, as the part of the frame on the side of the hotel melted away in the roaring gulf, was something terrific. There had not been much wind at first, but now a strong breeze sprung up, carrying the flames, with a spouting torrent of burning cinder and straw-flakes, over towards the house.

There were men on the house-roof with buckets ; but they were soon driven before the fire. Then the engine turned its stream upon the most exposed portions of the hotel. That was hardly done, however, when the well from which it had been drawing was exhausted.

“No more water !” said Phil, with pallid face and rigid lips. “The hotel will go !”

“Oh, *that* is too bad !” exclaimed Clara, who, remembering Phil’s wrongs, had not been so very sorry to see the barn in flames. “I always hate to think of families burnt out.”

“’T was the foolishest thing in creation !” cried the tailor, — “wastin’ water on that old buildin’ ; might ‘a’ knowed ‘t wa’n’t no use. Now look a’ there !”

The roof of the kitchen part of the hotel was beginning to blaze. Then followed scenes of wild confusion and excitement. The firemen, having run their hose to a neighboring well, and found insufficient water, hauled it on with shouts to the next ; the few guests of the house dragging out their own hurriedly packed trunks and piling them, with shawls, bags, and loose clothing, in the street ; a crowd of men and boys helping to remove what furniture could be most conveniently saved ; Sallie working bravely

with the rest, while her mother ran to and fro, shrieking frantically, and Bass roared out his orders.

Phil did not join the volunteers in tumbling out chairs and mattresses and pulling up carpets, but hastened to fetch his horse and wagon, and have them in readiness for transporting the guests to other houses. He had enough to do, which was perhaps fortunate, action being a relief to his agitated mind.

Nothing could save the hotel, and, when he returned for a second load of luggage, he found the new barn also in flames.

The horses had been led out with blankets flung over their heads, and the best of the wagons were rescued, with the buckboards, — as Phil did not fail to observe. With what feelings he viewed the scene of desolation, after the fire had made a clean sweep of the buildings, and the Besses were left homeless, with their heaped household goods lighted by the dying flames under a lurid sky, never can be known.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ACCUSATIONS.

MRS. CHADBOW and Clara had gone home while the hotel was burning, and they did not see Phil again until the next day. Even then he gave them no opportunity to speak with him, but remained solitary, absorbed, and silent, at a time when the general excitement brought people together and impelled the most unsocial to open their hearts.

“I want to ask him just one question,” Mrs. Chadbow said, with quiet significance; but she would not tell Clara what it was, and she was too discreet to mention to anybody but Phil himself what she had observed that night from her window an hour before the alarm.

The origin of the fire was a mystery. Bass declared that he himself shut the barn at nine o'clock, leaving everything safe; and nobody belonging to the hotel was believed to have entered it afterwards.

“I know who sot it!” he loudly declared to everybody. “I ain't a gunter say who 't is; but it's some-

body 't thinks I had a hand in burnin' his propety, which I had n't. I ain't a gunter call no names." And he rolled over from one leg to the other in a very excited manner.

With Mr. Minkins, who was the local agent of the company that had insured Bass's property, he was more explicit. He not only called names, but insisted that Phil should be arrested.

"We 'll have him arrested," said Minkins, "soon as ever we get evidence that 'll justify makin' out a complaint."

"But don't your own common-sense show ye that he done it?" cried Bass. "Ain't that evidence?"

"Wal, not precisely. We may think he had a motive for doin' it, jest as some other folks 'sides him s'pected you had a motive for deprivin' him of his buckboard. But re'ly, Sol," Minkins added, confidentially, "I don't see's there's any more proof,— I mean the genuoine article that 'll hold water,— not a whit more actooal proof 't he destroyed your property than that you destroyed hisn."

"That's a strange way o' lookin' at it! 'Tain't common-sense!" said Bass.

"I ruther guess you 'll find it is," replied Minkins; "an' 't most people 'll look at it in jest that strange sort o' way. An' my advice to you is, if you're re'ly

as much in earnest to find out who done it as I be, and as the comp'ny'll be, my advice is, to jest keep quiet till ye have some proof, and not go up an' down accusin' folks without no evidence."

It was hard for Bass to accept any such advice as that. He was starting to go, but turned back.

"I s'pose they won't be no trouble 'bout gittin my insurance?" he suggested.

"I don't know why they should be," Minkins answered, promptly. "Your policy is all right, and you are burnt out. The only question will be about the amount of damages. As it's a ruther important case, I've notified the comp'ny 't they'd better send up a special agent, an' I hope he'll be here in a day or two."

Bass looked disappointed. "I hoped me an' you'd be able to settle damages without no special agent, — neighbors so," he said.

"That's jest the reason why I think the agent better come up," Minkins replied. "If you make out a perty big claim and I 'low it, it'll likely be said I done it coz we was neighbors. If the agent don't come, then we'll see."

A determination to claim excessive damages, which Bass had already betrayed, and the necessity every neighbor felt of keeping on good terms with such a

man, were the chief reasons why Minkins had not only sent for the agent but strongly urged his coming.

Solomon had hardly gone out of the store when Drigson the tailor walked over from the shop without his hat, and put his shining bald head and skinny face in at the door.

"All alone?" he said to Minkins, after looking cautiously around.

"All alone," replied the good-natured storekeeper. "Come in; but I would n't shet the door."

"Yes, le' me shet it," said Drigson, nervously. "I've been waitin' to find ye alone. I've got suthin on my mind. I've got suthin on my mind, Neighbor Minkins!"

"Have ye, Jonathan?" Minkins smiled indulgently, knowing the tailor to be a nervous sort of man, and stepped to open the door again, it being a warm afternoon. "Nothin' that concerns me though, I s'pose."

"I guess you'll say it concerns you," Drigson replied, pale and scant of breath. "You can open the door ag'in if you want, for it's your premises and not mine; but one word fust."

"All right," said Minkins, with his hand on the latch.

Drigson looked around again, then, laying hold of Minkins's arm with his bony fingers, and putting his thin lips to his ear, said in a hoarse whisper, —

“I know who sot the fire!”

“You know!” ejaculated Minkins.

“I know; I wish I didn't. I don't wanter git mixed up in the thing; but I felt I oughter tell ye. I seen him do it; or not exactly *do it*, but I seen him *go for to do it*.”

“When? Who?”

“That night, a little while 'fore the fire broke out, I seen him sly into the barn. Somebody else seen him, too. If you won't open the door, I'll tell ye.”

This, then, is the story which Drigson the tailor told.

“Ye see, I've been kin' o' lonesome sence my wife died, and I don't mind tellin' ye in confidence, Neighbor Minkins, I've been keepin' my eyes open for another companion, and latterly I've ruther got my feelin's concentrated on to Betsy Doane.”

“Ye might 'a' made a wus choice,” said the store-keeper, encouragingly, as the tailor hesitated. “I hope she recipercates.”

“Wal, she doos in a measure,” replied Drigson; “but there's an obstacle.”

As he at the same time passed his bony fingers over his bald scalp, Minkins inferred that the trouble lay perhaps in what may be called his lack of capillary attraction.

“Baldness?” he suggested.

“Oh, no,” said, Drigson, looking up with a sallow smile; “not baldness, but Bass.”

“Bass! How so?”

“Oh, yes, Neighbor Minkins. I ain’t so young as I once was, — but neither is Betsy a girl in her teens. She don’t make any great objection either to my humble person or little bit of property, but the obstacle, as I tell ye, is Solomon Bass. She has worked for him so long, he’s re’ly got to feel ’t he sort o’ owns her, and I don’t know but he’d break my head if he knew I was goin’ to take her away.”

“I see,” said Minkins; “but come to the p’int,” impatiently.

“The result has been,” Drigson went on, “’t I’ve courted Betsy a little on the sly, and that’s how it happened. I walked home with her that night, and was standin’ in the kitchen door with her for some time after ’leven o’clock. We thought everybody in the house was abed and asleep, and we was havin’ our little last words when we heard somebody comin’, kin’ o’ creepin’ along, from the side door o’ the hotel.”

“Was it dark?” Minkins asked.

“Not so dark but what I knew, almost without lookin’, who ’t was. There was clouds overhead, ye know, but there was a moon above the clouds. I was scaret, I confess, and I slunk further into the doorway with Betsy, so ’s not to be seen.”

“What was ye scaret at? If ’t was the boy I suppose, I don’t see what there was about him to scare even a more fidgety man than you be, Jonathan.”

“Boy!” cried Jonathan. “’T wa’n’t no boy, le’ me tell ye! ’T was a man. Sol Bass.”

Minkins leaned back against the counter and stared at the lean tailor.

“Sol himself,” Drigson avowed. “I waited till he got past; then I peeped out, and seen him go softly and open the little door of the old barn and go in. There was such a mystery about his movements, and it seemed to me so strange ’t he should be stealin’ into his own barn at that time o’ night, I was more stirred up in my mind than ever; for I declare, if I did n’t think for a second he was after a hosswhip to stripe my coat with.”

“Did you see him come out ag’in?” Minkins inquired.

“Course not. I run and cut behind the house, and took to my heels acrost the orchard double-quick!

I had n't more'n got home, and quiet in bed, when the fire broke out."

"This's a very extraordinary story!" said the astonished and puzzled storekeeper. "You done right to come and tell me, for it'll prevent suspicion from fallin' on to the wrong person. I never did take much stock in Sol Bass; but I did n't think he was a man to burn up his buildin's to git the insurance."

"Nor I," said Jonathan Drigson. "And I might think there was some mistake about it if he had n't told everybody he did n't go to his barn after nine o'clock. Why should he say that? And 't was so short a time after he went in that the fire broke out, I could n't help thinkin' he sot it."

"It certain looks like it," said Minkins; "but say nothin' to nobody till the insurance comp'ny's agent comes. Then we'll look after Sol Bass."

"But don't lug me and Betsy in," pleaded the timid tailor.

"Of course not, without we're obliged to," replied Minkins.

A week passed, during which time the tavern-keeper — who had now no tavern to keep — heard nothing of the special agent. Again and again he urged Minkins, in a most anxious and persistent way,

“Le’s settle it ’twixt ourselves, like neighbors.” But Minkins had as constantly put him off.

“I’ve got a letter, sayin’ the agent ’ll be here jest as soon as he can get around,” was his final excuse.

“So I don’t see but what we shall have to wait.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MAN WITH THE GRAY WHISKERS.

MEANWHILE a new-comer at one of the boarding-houses patronized all the drivers in turn, from slab-sided Lorson down to little Phil. He was a middle-aged man, with iron-gray whiskers, pleasant manners, and a lively curiosity regarding everything and everybody in and about the village.

He got acquainted with Bass while waiting for Lorson to "hook on to the one-hoss buckboard" at the old farm-house where Solomon had got partial shelter for his family and his teams. He got still better acquainted with Lorson during their long ride to the Summit. The drivers all found him delightfully sociable and familiar, and talked freely with him about the late exciting occurrences in the village.

Phil had not for a long time had a passenger he liked so well. Before he knew it, he found himself telling the story of his troubles with Bass and the burning of his buckboard,—not without passionate

swellings of the heart and tremors of the voice, excited by the stranger's sympathy.

Then one day this aimable gentleman dropped into Mr. Minkins's store, and they walked over together to the house where Bass was staying.

They found Bass sitting on a wagon-neap, looking glum at the prospect of things ; but he brightened at sight of the stranger, who was known to employ teams.

"Mr. Bass," said the smiling Minkins, "I wanter interdooce you to Mr. Crosby. Mr. Crosby, Mr. Bass."

"I believe we have met before," said Mr. Crosby, extending his hand.

Bass rolled off from the wagon-pole upon his feet and reached out his fat hand, with, "Yaas, I've had the pleasure."

"I want you to be better acquainted," said Minkins. "Mr. Crosby"—smiling very sweetly on Bass—"is the special agent of the Insurance Comp'ny."

Bass's hand dropped to his side, and he changed countenance perceptibly as he stammered, —

"I don't—I did n't know—I had n't the least idee! Why did n't you tell me that before?"

"It's a pleasant place, and I thought I would look

around a little before settling down to business," the agent replied. "Besides, I thought I could learn as much of what it's my business to find out in that way as in any other."

Lorson, who had come out of the barn in time to overhear the conversation, recalled his perhaps too familiar talk with this man, and gave him an anxious glance. Mr. Crosby did not appear to notice him, but went on, —

"You've met with a serious loss, Mr. Bass, and some preliminary investigation, under the circumstances, appeared necessary. Don't leave your seat; we can sit and talk just as well here as anywhere."

The wagon-tongue being supported at the end, he sat down on it in a familiar sort of way, and, taking out his knife, began to split a straw.

Bass sat down to it looking very uneasy; and they began to talk of the fire, while Minkins smilingly withdrew.

The agent heard all Bass had to say with quiet assent; and having cut up one straw, began on another. Solomon had gained confidence as he went on, no doubt relieved to find that the agent, whom he had dreaded to see, was after all so reasonable a man.

Mr. Crosby then asked a few mildly searching

questions, especially with regard to the origin of the fire. Having answered them with some excitement of manner, Solomon said, —

“I’ve told you all I know, and what I think. Now tell me what you think.”

“About” — the agent reached for a fragment of straw that had fallen upon the ground — “the origin of the — fire?”

“Yaas,” said Bass, with trembling interest. “Who sot it?”

“Well, Mr. Bass, since you ask my opinion,” — the agent was dividing the fragment very carefully, — “I suppose I must tell you.”

“You think the boy sot it?” said Bass, almost too eagerly.

“No, Mr. Bass.” The agent turned and looked him quietly in the face. “I think you set it.”

He did not raise his voice in the least, but spoke very much as if he had been disagreeing with Bass about the weather they might expect to-morrow.

This calmness of tone made the effect on Bass appear all the more surprising to Lorson, peeping from the barn. Usually so violent and overbearing when crossed in his plans or opposed in his opinions, that rotund, puffy-cheeked man seemed for a moment struck dumb. He opened his mouth, but it gave no

more sound than if he had been a fish ; and he turned his pig eyes on the agent in helpless fright and bewilderment.

At length he stuttered out, "Wh-what do ye think — I should want to — burn up my own prope'ty for?"

The agent brushed away the pieces of straw from his knees, and shutting his knife with a decided click, returned it to his pocket; he had finished splitting straws.

"I suppose I can answer that question, too, since you ask me. In the first place, I don't think you intended to burn quite so much property. You had reason to expect that the house and the new barn would be saved. But the old barn was in your way, as you have more than once been heard to declare. It was insured for more than it was worth, no repairs having been made on it since you took out your first policy. It did not contain more than half as much hay as you claim. The wagons that were burnt in it might have been got out ; but you left them to burn. They were insured, too, for double their value, considering that you were anxious to get rid of them, as you have many times said, in order to get buckboards, or more attractive and stylish modern vehicles."

Bass had by this time got up from the neap, and

was rolling from one leg to the other, as if he had been standing with bare feet on hot bricks.

"It's all a lie!" he burst forth, with fierce gestures; "invented for to ruin me. I tell ye the boy sot it!"

The agent also rose, though his voice did not. He stood facing the excited man, and went on calmly,—

"I've no doubt one of your motives in setting the fire was to have suspicion rest on the boy you hate so and have tried to ruin. I wish, Mr. Bass, I could be as sure you did n't fire your barn as I am that he did n't burn his buckboard. But my conviction is that the same man who was at the bottom of that business had a hand in this."

The poor, stupid, scared, half-maddened creature thereupon injured his own cause by swearing that he had nothing to do with the burning of Phil's buckboard, and defying any one to prove the contrary.

"Unluckily for the boy, proof is wanting in that case," said the agent; "luckily for us, however, it is not wanting in this. The fact that the accident occurred near the close of your busy season — at a time when well-insured summer-hotel property is so extremely apt to burn — is, of course, only a corroborative circumstance; but the fact that you were seen by two witnesses to steal into the old barn that night

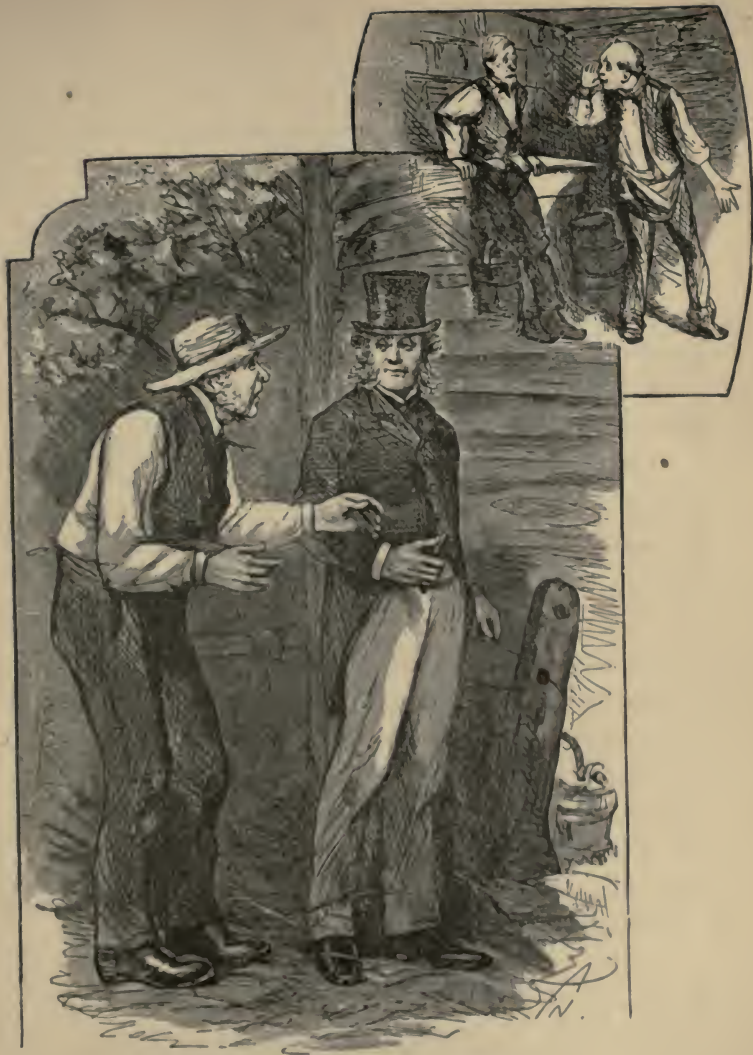
just before the fire broke out, — after eleven o'clock, — while you say you did not visit it after you shut it up at nine, — that," said the agent, clapping the palm of one hand with three fingers of the other very positively, "that we consider proof."

"Seen? Me? Seen stealin' into the barn after 'leven? It's all a lie, I tell ye, and a conspiracy to ruin me!" said Bass, in terrible agitation. "Now don't, I beg of ye!" he pleaded. "Have mercy on a poor man!"

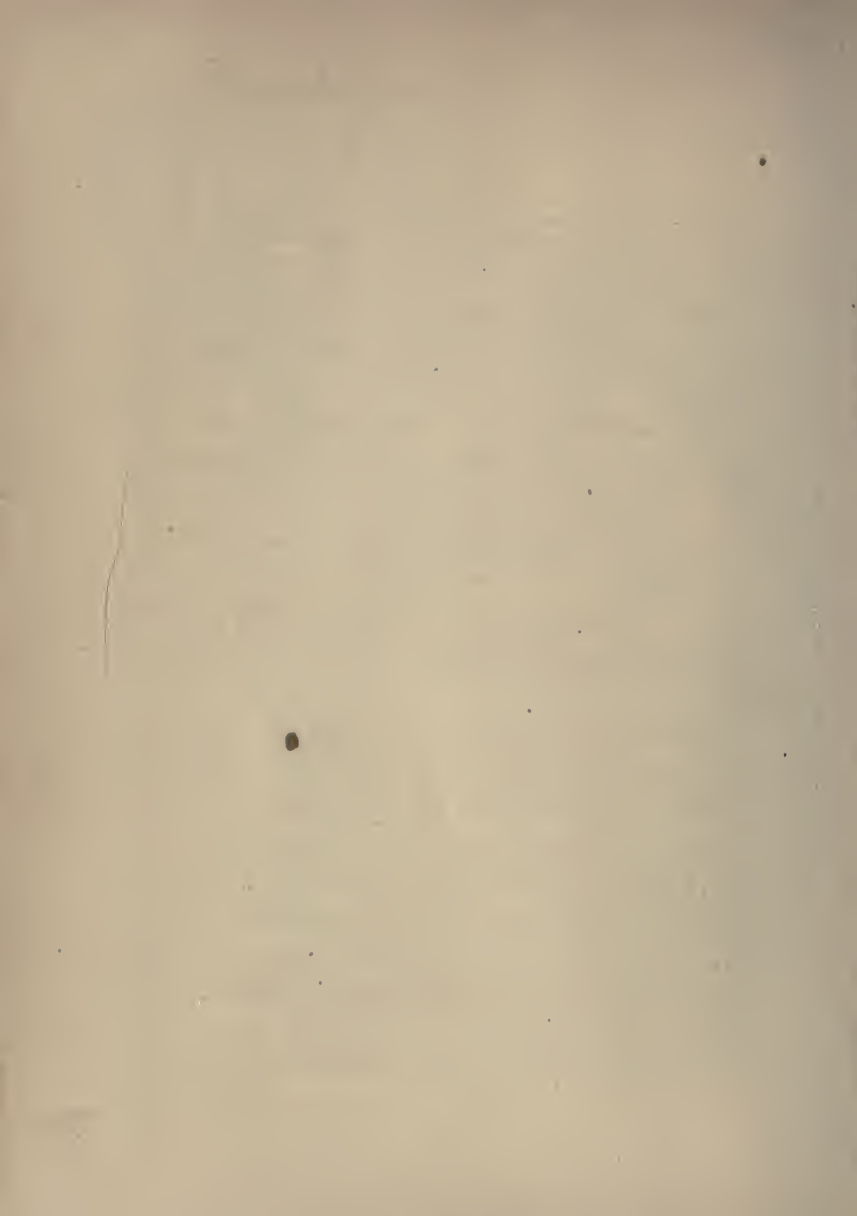
"I don't intend to be any harder on you than I am obliged to be in my position," Mr. Crosby replied, watching him closely. "I have no personal interest in the matter one way or the other. It's my business to do justice to you as well as to the company."

"Look here!" said Bass. "It's a terrible thing! I can't stand it. What you say shows me I may be in your power, though I am an innocent man; you may beat me out of my insurance money, and make paupers of us all, 'sides givin' me a repotation no man wants to have. Now don't. I'll do the handsome thing by ye if you'll be easy with me; I will."

Innocent or guilty, Solomon was injuring his cause still more by holding out the offer of a bribe to a man like Crosby. He made no reply, but seemed about to go.



“ You won’t go to prosecutin’ me ? ” [p. 197].



“What ye go’n’ to do?” Bass entreated to know.
“You won’t go to prosecutin’ me?”

“I don’t know about that; it depends,” answered the agent, coldly.

“What do you want me to do?” cried Bass.

“I want you to give me up your policies,” said the agent.

“My insurance policies, without gitt’n’ my insurance, nor any part on’t? You can’t mean that!” exclaimed Bass.

“Yes, that’s just what I mean. Your claim is exorbitant, anyway; and if you fired the barn, as I firmly believe you did, you are not entitled to a cent. More than that, you deserve to be made an example of.”

“But I tell ye I did n’t!” said Bass, in abject terror. “My claim may be too much for the hay; and I won’t say a word about the old wagons if you think I could ‘a’ saved ‘em and did n’t. Have it your own way, squire, about them; but don’t hold back what’s payable on the buildin’s, nor accuse me of firin’ on ‘em. Who says I went into the barn after ‘leven o’clock that night? I’d jest like to know who ever started that story!”

“I can’t tell you just now,” said the agent, “but you will be confronted with those witnesses in due time.”

He was going. Bass followed him into the street.

"Don't do anything in a hurry. Give me time to think it over, — time to consult a lawyer."

"I shall be very glad to have you consult a lawyer, Mr Bass; for, if he is honest, and you tell him the whole story, I'm sure he will advise you that the easiest way out of this business is for you to hand me over those policies. I'll see you again to-morrow."

Saying this in a kind, but decided manner, the special agent took leave, while Bass hurried back to Lorson.

"What you been tellin' him, you traitor?"

"Nothin' pa'tic'ler," said the teamster. "I'd no idee he was the agent or I would n't 'a' said anything."

"'T was you that told him about the hay," cried Solomon, "and the wagons. What if I did say leave 'em be, when there was other things to be looked after? Why must you go and blab? You've ruined me, you scoundrel!"

"Don't call me a scoundrel!" replied the slab-sided one, resentfully. "I hain't ruined you; 't ain't me, I'd have ye know, — but I can do my share towards it if you provoke me!"

He threw down a horse collar he held in his hand, with an angry gesture, as if about to strike work and set up the ruining business at once; whereupon poor Bass humbled himself even to him, begging him to stay and be his friend.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PHIL'S SECRET.

IF Phil had not revenge enough already, his cup should have been pretty well filled, one would think, when he heard of this new calamity which threatenēd to overwhelm his enemy. For hear of it he did very soon. Everybody heard of it. Yet when the startling rumor spread, that Bass would not only lose his insurance, but that he might also be convicted of firing his own buildings, there was nobody so astonished as Phil.

It really troubled him at first far more than it delighted him. Even when it became the village talk, and the wary Minkins confirmed it, the mind and conscience of the boy were in such a dizzy whirl that he could hardly have told whether he was more rejoiced or alarmed. There seemed to be every reason why he should feel relieved, even though he had had no hate to gratify; for he must have known that he himself had been an object of suspicion.

He tried to harden his heart, and said many times

to himself, with angry vehemence, "Good enough for him : he deserves it anyway !" At the same time he carried his head high, and met the eyes of people with resolute defiance ; but all the while secret remorse and anxiety filled his soul.

There was one person, however, who experienced a pure and profound satisfaction upon hearing that it was Bass himself who set the fire. That person was Mrs. Chadbow.

"Now I'll tell you the truth about it," she said to Clara, who had known all along that her mother cherished some dark thoughts regarding Phil. "I have suspected him,—I have more than suspected him,—I am sorry to say. I have done him a great wrong."

"How could you ?" said Clara, reproachfully. "You might have known Phil could n't do such a thing as that."

"I wasn't willing to believe he could ; but we don't know to what extremes of desperate conduct even a good-hearted boy may be driven. I saw him capable of showing resentment even to us. Then we all noticed how strangely he acted just after the fire. He had something on his mind, and he has n't got quite free from it yet ; but I am glad to know it was n't what I thought."

"You said you wanted to ask him a question; what was it?"

"I am very sure," replied the mother, "that I saw him go out of Mr. Marshall's barn in the direction of Bass's tavern that night, not long before the fire broke out. I wanted to ask him where he went, but I never did. I had no chance for a day or two, — and then I dreaded to have my worst fears confirmed. Of course, I never mentioned the circumstance to anybody else; and yet I feel now that I owe the boy a great deal for having done him such injustice. I must make him a present."

"He wants a watch more than anything. I have heard him say so," said Clara.

"That's just what I have been thinking of," replied her mother. "I believe I will send for one this very day."

Since the time when they had so offended Phil by making the trip to the Summit on Bass's buckboard, they had not ridden at all; but not long after this they re-engaged Phil for an afternoon. Having keenly felt Mrs. Chadbow's coldness towards him, and his separation from Clara, the boy was all the more deeply touched by their extreme kindness to him that day. And when, standing amid the great trunks of Cathedral Woods, to which they drove, the

mother slipped something into his vest-pocket, while the daughter held her hands over his eyes, and it turned out to be a watch, he was completely overcome.

“The case is nothing but silver, as you see,” said Mrs. Chadbow, as he held it out before his surprised and tearful eyes; “but the works are as good as if it was gold. What you need, Phil, is a good time-piece, rather than anything showy; that’s what Clara and I both thought.”

“It is handsome, — too handsome!” exclaimed Phil. “I don’t know what you should give it to me for. I don’t deserve it!”

“Don’t say that, Phil: you have been very kind to us in many ways; and I have not always been so kind to you as I might have been”; and, as if to avoid further thanks on his part, or explanations on hers, Mrs. Chadbow fell to gathering ferns in the great woods.

“What does she mean by that”? Phil said to Clara, as he stood trying to reconcile his conscience to the watch. “She has always been kind to me. It’s I who have appeared cold and ungrateful.”

“That has been because you were so full of trouble, which made you too sensitive, perhaps,” replied Clara. “We understand that.”

Phil felt strangely impelled then and there to cry out, "No, no! you don't understand!" and to tell her his dreadful secret. It might have saved him some agonies of soul if he had done so. He looked at her, so innocent and trustful, then at the bright new watch he held in his hand, and compressed his quivering lips.

"We were so glad to know," she went on, "that it was Bass himself who set the fire. You must have been glad. Mother says it is always a great satisfaction to have the real authors of such wickedness known, so that innocent persons may not be suspected. That is a terrible thing!"

"Terrible!" Phil echoed, faintly, after a pause, during which his trembling fingers fumbled with the simple watch-guard. Then, perceiving her eyes fixed on him with an emotion which he mistook, he rallied and said, "I thought — I imagined — your mother suspected me."

"Oh!" exclaimed Clara, with generous feeling. "She never really believed you could do such a thing. But — I don't know but she would box my ears for telling you this," lowering her voice, while her eyes followed her mother stooping among the shady undergrowths not far off.

"What?" Phil demanded, anxiously, as she hesitated.

“She saw you go out of Mr. Marshall’s barn that night just before the fire.”

Phil turned pale. “Me?” he faltered, with a sickly attempt to appear surprised.

“She was quite sure it was you; but she was careful not to mention it, even to me, until it became known that Bass burnt his own buildings, and there was no danger of any one else being suspected.”

Phil made no reply, but abruptly hid his face by stooping to pick a fern. He did not quite recover from his agitation while they remained in the woods; and, though his spirits rallied on the homeward drive, he had frequent fits of abstraction, which, he knew, must appear strange to his friends.

To mask his disturbing thoughts, and perhaps drive them from his mind, he took out the watch and praised it, and said, with a laugh, —

“I hope no such accident will happen to this present, Mrs. Chadbow, as happened to the one you gave me last year. You remember the blue necktie?”

Of course she remembered it; and of course she and Clara had wondered not a little that they never saw him wear it. He now for the first time told them the story of the misadventure by which he lost it, passing over Miss Sallie Bass’s particular jealousy

of Clara, however, while vividly portraying that young lady's capriciousness of temper.

His amusing description was just finished as they reached Mrs. Shedrick's door, when Clara said, laughingly, —

“Don't let Miss Bass get hold of the watch.”

“No danger of that; I never see her nowadays,” he replied, little dreaming how near the tomboy was then.

CHAPTER XXX.

MISS BASS ONCE MORE.

PHIL stepped from his wagon at the barn, and was startled at seeing a figure rise up and advance from a corner within. His first thought was of his father, whose reappearance he constantly feared. But a glance showed him that the figure was not that of a man at all, but a woman, or, rather, a tall girl, with red hair and a mouth curtained with large upper teeth.

"Don't be scaret, Phil," she said, seeing him start back. "'T ain't nobody but me."

"What do you want here?" he demanded, harshly, thinking no person of the name of Bass could come there with friendly intent. "To see if I have any more buckboards to burn?"

"Don't speak to me that way," she replied, in a pleading voice. "Just remember we was friends once."

"That's not pleasant for me, after all that has happened," said Phil.

"I know pa and I have been to blame," Sallie admitted. "You don't know how I have felt about it sometimes; if you did, you would n't look so cross at me; you'd stop untackling your hoss and hear what I've to say."

"You can say nothing that will interest me much," replied Phil, with tight lips, "unless you tell me who burnt up my buckboard."

"You think pa done that," said Sallie, with strong feeling; "but he did n't. He did n't know anything about it."

Phil gave a scoffing laugh as he stripped the harness from Brownie's back and sent him into the stall.

"It's too bad there should have been all this trouble," she went on. "If I ever treated you mean, it was coz I thought too much of ye. I can say it, now it's all over with."

"I should hope it *was* over with, if that's the way you show your partiality!" replied Phil, bitterly; yet he was touched by the tomboy's humble confession.

"You did n't always think me so awful bad," she continued, after waiting for him to come out of the stall. "Think of the good times we used to have together,— fishing, sassafrasing, nutting, and getting

spruce gum and wild grapes! And the day when you run off first, and I coaxed you back, — was n't I a friend to you then? Anyway, I meant to be. I always meant to be."

"I thought you did," said Phil, remembering her many good qualities, notwithstanding all she had made him suffer. "But if you were really my friend, why didn't you make your father keep his promise to pay me wages? Why have you let him follow me up the way he has done, — claiming the wages I was earning of Krennidge, keeping me out of a place, and doing everything to injure me?"

"I could n't help that ; he was so mad coz you left us. But now, Phil, you won't be too hard on us, will you?"

"Hard on you? I don't know what you mean ; I've nothing more to do with you!"

"Oh, yes! I guess you'll conclude you have, Phil," said Sallie, wiping away a tear. "You'd be sorry for pa, if you could see him now. He meant well by you, too ; though I own he hain't done the right thing."

"I should think not," said Phil, starting to pull his wagon into the barn.

She went behind to help him by pushing, much as they used to work together in old times. After

he had dropped the shafts, she stepped forward and met him face to face as he turned, looking earnestly into his eyes and saying pathetically, —

“You’d pity him, I know, Phil! They’re trying to beggar us. You don’t want that, do you?”

“I don’t see why I should n’t want it,” Phil answered, with revengeful hardness. “If any man ever got his deserts, it’s your father!”

“He may have deserved something, but not all,” said Sal. “Think of his losing everything at his age, even his good name, — for they mean to take that away too.”

“His good name? as if he ever had one!” sneered Phil.

“I see you are awfully down on him; and I don’t know as it was any use for me to come and see you,” Sallie replied, despondingly.

“I don’t see what use it could be, anyway,” said Phil.

“Oh, yes, you do!” she cried, giving him a keen glance through her tears. “You could save our property and his good name, if you chose.”

“I? How?” he demanded.

“There’s just one person in the world who knows pa did n’t set his own barn afire,” she answered, touching him lightly on the arm, and giving him a

steady, penetrating look. "And that's you, Phil Farlow!"

Phil did not speak; he could only stand and stare at her.

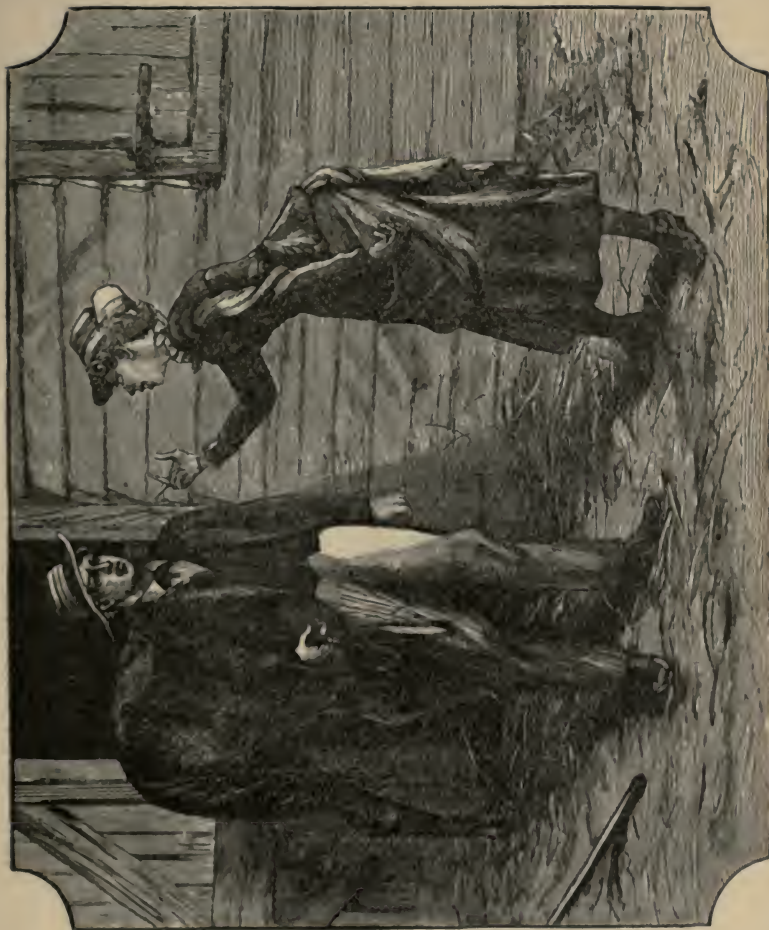
"Folks thought he was getting rich; but he wa'n't. He put everything he had into the new barn, and borrowed money besides. Now, if he loses his insurance, he won't have enough left to pay his debts. The company owes him 'leven thousand dollars on his policies; they're trying to beat him out of it; and I don't see but what they will, if you don't come forward and say jest one word."

"What are you talking about?" cried Phil. "As if I knew anything about the fire!"

"Oh, you know!" she exclaimed, shaking her finger at him. It seemed an effort for her to keep down her rising passion; but she succeeded, and went on, in a tone of entreaty, "Come, Phil! It's no use your trying to deny it to me; I know you set the fire as well as if I seen you do it!"

"You think me such a villain as that!" he exclaimed, in a low voice, looking anxiously to see if any one was coming.

"I don't think you was a very great villain, even if you did," said Sal. "You only meant to burn the old barn, with the buckboards,—if they had hap-



“Come, Phil! it's no use your trying to deny it to me.” [p. 210].

pened to be in it. 'Twa' n't no worse than what you believed pa had done to you. I'm sure you never was so black-hearted as to mean to burn us out of house and home; I never believed that of you, Phil!"

"Very considerate in you indeed!" he replied. "Much obliged for your good opinion. I'll come to you when I want written character."

"You need n't be so sarcastic," she said, still resolutely keeping down something that sparkled in her eyes and almost choked her voice. "I'm in dead earnest. Nobody'll blame you very much. If you're afraid they will, — if you're afraid of getting yourself into trouble by owning up, — if that's what you think of, you can manage to tell some friends and then get out of the way. Do it, Phil!" she implored. "You sha'n't lose anything by it. I'll give you all the money you ask, or send it to you, soon as pa gets his insurance. Be good to *me*, Phil! Now do!"

Phil was in a tremor of nervous agitation; but he answered promptly, —

"Either you are a fool, Sallie Bass, or you take me for one! To imagine that, if I was bad enough to do such a thing, I would be good enough to own up to it! Or do you mean to bribe me to confess a crime I am innocent of by offering me some of the profits? You're crazy, Sallie Bass!"

"You won't?" she demanded, in a changed voice.

"Of course I won't!"

"Then take care!" she cried, again shaking her finger in his face. "You think you've had a fine revenge; but it will cost you dear. You won't enjoy it long; your own conscience won't let you. I know you too well, Phil Farlow. It's an awful thing to leave the wrong person to be suspected of what you know he did n't do!"

Her voice suddenly broke into sobs. Phil stood gazing at her as if almost tempted to speak what he knew would thrill her with joy and gratitude.

"There!" she exclaimed, resolutely wiping her eyes and throwing back her hair. "Ma told me I would get mad if I come to talk with you; but I hain't! I'm going to part friends with you, Phil, if you'll let me. If you see us go to the poor-house, just remember that I know who sent us there, and that I forgive you." So saying she hurried away, as if afraid the fiend of temper she had kept down would rise and rend them both at last.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE NEW BUCKBOARD.

PHIL finished taking care of his horse, and then walked to and fro in the barn, thinking with no little trepidation of this strange interview. One phrase of Sallie's, especially, kept ringing in his ears; it was so much like what Clara Chadbow had said to him in the woods that afternoon: "*It's an awful thing to leave the wrong person to be suspected!*" He took out his watch and looked at it; but that could not divert his mind from his agitating thoughts. It quickened his conscience, rather.

"What if they knew what I am keeping back?" he said to himself. "Why should I get into such a tangle? How shall I ever get out of it?"

Hearing the clanking wheels of the evening stage-coach roll by, Phil looked out and saw a bright new buckboard fastened to it by the shafts and drawn behind. He was saying to himself bitterly that there were plenty of buckboards for other people, but not one for himself, when the driver reined up his four horses and stopped in front of the barn.

“Hallo, Phil!” he cried, familiarly, stepping down over the wheels. “It’s come. Where’ll you have it?”

“What has come?” said Phil.

“Your new buckboard; don’t you understand?”

Phil did not understand in the least. Was he in a dream?

“It was sent to the doctor’s order, and I took it to his house; but he said bring it over to you. He can tell you all about it, if there’s anything you want to know. I s’pose, meanwhile, you won’t have any very great objection to my leaving it here.”

Before the boy had begun to recover from his amazement, the driver loosed the fastenings and dropped the shafts. Then, mounting to his seat again, and measuring out his whip, he drove away, his half-dozen passengers, who witnessed Phil’s bewilderment, no doubt thinking him a very stupid fellow indeed.

He drew the light, strong vehicle into the yard, and there looked it all over in the greatest surprise and excitement. It was just such a wagon as he had talked with the doctor about; and it was undoubtedly fresh from the shop, though coated with the dust of the stage road. But whose was it, and how did it ever get there?

He ran in haste to the house, and was waylaid by Clara, who asked him eagerly about the new vehicle.

“I know no more about it than if it had dropped out of the sky! I am going to ask the doctor; though I dread to leave it,” he cried, excitedly, “for fear it won’t be here when I come back.”

The doctor smiled in his quiet, humorous way when Phil came rushing into his office with the breathless inquiry,—

“Where did that buckboard come from? Whose is it?”

The doctor’s answer was very cool and deliberate.

“It came from the manufacturers; and it is yours.”

“How—mine? I thought we concluded not to order it.”

“Sit down, Phil, and don’t be excited. We did conclude not to order it on your account. In fact, the most I wanted to get from you was an idea of the sort of vehicle you fancied. You had so many friends, and they all seemed to feel so strongly that not only you but the whole community had suffered outrage and loss in the burning of your buckboard, that I thought they would be glad to make it up to you; so I headed a subscription paper, and soon had money enough pledged to justify me in sending the order.”

“O Dr. Mower! I never dreamed of it!”

“Of course you did n't, and I never meant you should. That's why I kept away from Mrs. Shedrick's with my paper, thinking I would go there the last thing, if it was necessary; but it has n't been necessary. Here's a list of the names, if you wish to see it.”

Phil took the paper in his unsteady hand, but he could not read a word; he just sat there and cried, like the child he was.

“What is there to feel bad about?” said the doctor, winking hard at a tear or two in his own eyes. “Hem!” — clearing his throat. “I think I should laugh, if I was you. Summer boarders and old residents united, you see, in giving you this token of their sympathy and respect.”

Phil managed to read a few names, then tears rushed into his eyes again.

“I thought my friends were forgetting me; and they were doing this for me all the time,” he exclaimed. “Oh, I wish I had known!”

“Maybe you would n't have felt quite so hard towards Bass,” said Dr. Mower. “He's as badly off now as his worst enemy could wish; and I guess even you, Phil, can afford to have a little pity on him. Though, to be sure, he brought his misfortunes on himself.”

Phil was trying to read the paper again. Suddenly he jumped up and walked quickly to the window, where he appeared to be struggling with some powerful emotion. Then he turned with a cry of distress.

“I can’t stand it! I can’t stand it!”

“What is it you can’t stand, my boy?”

“Something I have kept from you,—something I must tell or my heart will burst!”

“Ah!” breathed the doctor, finding there was more in the boy’s betrayal of feeling than he had supposed. “Tell me all about it; don’t be afraid.” As Phil did not speak, he added, cautiously, after a pause, “It’s about the fire?”

Phil covered his face and gave a convulsive sort of nod. It was some time before he could speak coherently, but as soon as he got command of his voice he poured out his story.

The doctor listened much as if he had been hearing the confessions of a patient who had come to him for counsel and cure; and when at last Phil exclaimed, “Tell me what to do!” he answered, emphatically, —

“There is only one thing to do, of course. This is all a very great surprise to me, but I know just how you have felt, and why you have acted as you have.” He looked up at the clock. “There is

one man who must know the facts in the case at once."

"You mean Bass?" said Phil, with a look of pain and dread.

"I mean Crosby," Dr. Mower replied, "the insurance agent. I hear he is in town again, trying to force Sol Bass to a settlement,—a settlement that will leave him without a penny in the world. Come! the sooner you get this bad business off your mind the better. I'll go with you."

Poor Phil felt stronger already after his confession. The doctor's cheerful manner and promises of help and sympathy encouraged him, and after a little further talk they set off together to find the special agent.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN THE LAWYER'S OFFICE.

THE experienced Crosby had scarcely any doubt that Bass had fairly forfeited his insurance by firing his own barn, yet he saw the uncertainty of proving the company's case before a jury.

"Our timid tailor," he wrote to the home office, "will be a poor witness for us, I am afraid. If I was a lawyer on the other side, I believe I could so tangle him up in a cross-examination that he would hardly know what he was swearing to; and make it appear that he saw nobody going-into the barn that night but a spectre his own terrors conjured up."

As time elapsed, Drigson was beginning himself to suspect that his fears might have caused him to take some other person for Bass. As for Betsy Doane, she never once pretended to have recognized the landlord, but, standing farther within the doorway, she had merely had glimpses of a figure, and heard footsteps, and taken Drigson's word that it was Solomon.

The corroborating circumstances were indeed strong, — Bass's exorbitant claims, his neglect to save the old wagons, his often-expressed wish to replace them with new ones, and the occurrence of the fire so near the close of the season. But these proved nothing. Nor were his miserable fears and entreaties, when confronted by the accusing agent, his readiness to abate his claims, and his offer of a bribe, inconsistent with his innocence of the main charge.

"The best course for us," wrote the agent, "is to press him hard, and rely upon his consciousness of guilt and his fear of punishment to make him yield his policies."

It was with this intention that he had returned from a brief tour of the mountains, and was this very afternoon having an interview with Bass at the office of Bass's lawyer. The conference had been long, heated, and unsatisfactory. It was getting late. More than once Mr. Crosby had risen to depart with the threat on his lips, "The law, then, must settle it!" but each time he had sat down again as Bass begged him not to go and showed signs of yielding. Then the door was opened and Dr. Mower looked in.

"We have been to your boarding-house, Mr. Crosby," he said, "and have followed you here.



“Phil has come to tell what he knows, — and he knows a good deal.” [p. 221].

We've a little business with you, this young person and I. As it concerns Mr. Bass, perhaps you won't object to hearing it in his presence."

The agent made no objection; while Bass, seeing Phil's pale and anxious face in the entry, rolled up on his feet and shook at him his fat, clinched hand.

"There's the feller that can settle this dispute, if he will," he exclaimed, with apoplectic passion.

"And like as not he will, Solomon," replied the doctor, "if you will sit down again, be quiet, and give him a chance. Phil has come to tell what he knows, — and he knows a good deal."

"About the fire?" said Bass's lawyer.

"About the fire," replied the doctor, calmly. "Sit down, Phil," pushing along a chair the lawyer offered him.

Phil remained standing, his face pale but determined, his lips compressed, his chest heaving with quick breaths. The lawyer got Bass into his seat again, where he glowered upon the boy with his bloated face and pig-eyes peering out, a picture of mingled hate and hope and fear, which would have been comic if it had not been so brutal. He hardly knew yet whether Phil had come to speak the truth or to add another link to the chain of evidence against him.

“He has come of his own accord,” the doctor added, “and I bespeak for him the consideration such an act deserves; for he might not have come at all; he might have left our friend Bass here in the trouble which some are so unkind as to think just good enough for him.”

Mr. Crosby sat with one leg over the other and one arm resting on the lawyer’s table. He eyed Phil keenly.

“Is this true,” he said, at length, “that you know about the origin of Bass’s fire?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Phil, unfalteringly.

“Then how happens it that you have kept it so long to yourself? Did n’t you know Mr. Bass was suspected, and in difficulty in consequence?”

“I did,” said Phil; “and I was willing he should suffer a little,—after what he has done to me. Besides, I did n’t want to tell what I knew.”

Here his voice broke a little, and his features writhed. Mr. Crosby, watching him closely, inquired,—

“Then why do you come forward now?”

“I can’t help it; I feel that I must,” Phil answered. “Mr. Bass has been no friend to me; he has made me hate him. But for all that I can’t stand off any longer.”

Bass could not keep his seat. He started up as if to clutch the boy, and roared out impatiently, while the doctor interposed, and the lawyer held him back, —

“ Say it right out, why don't ye, if ye sot the fire, as I know ye did ? ”

“ I did not set it,” said Phil, addressing his reply to the agent.

“ Did not ? ” Mr. Crosby repeated. “ Tell us, then, who did.”

Phil drew a deep breath, while a look of anguish crossed his face, and answered, —

“ It was my father.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BOY'S STORY.

“**F**ARLOW!” Bass exclaimed. “He hain’t been round!”

The agent waved him back. “Tell us all about it,” he said to Phil.

“He has been to see me twice this summer,” Phil resumed, in a forced and hollow voice. “The first time, he stayed with me all night in Mr. Marshall’s barn, and came so near dropping sparks in the straw from his pipe and matches that I determined never to let him in again. The next time he came was — that night.”

Phil’s throat was dry, his voice husky and faint; it seemed impossible for him to go on. The doctor gave him a glass of water from the lawyer’s pitcher, and, after a painful pause, he continued, —

“I don’t know what time it was when he woke me up by rattling the barn-door. I was frightened. I did n’t know whether he had come again, or whether the men who had burnt my buckboard were after my

horse, — and I could n't have told at first which I dreaded the most, — but as soon as I was well awake, I hoped it was the men : I should have known what to do with them."

"And you did n't know what to do with your own father?" the agent inquired.

"I did not. That's the terrible thing about it. He was once a bright, fine-looking, agreeable man ! if I do say it !" Phil exclaimed, with deep feeling ; "but bad habits and carelessness in money matters ruined him. It's awful to say so, but it's the truth, — he is now just a miserable vagabond. I knew his voice, but I was afraid to let him into the barn. I handed him money through the window, and sent him away. I can never tell how I felt when I did it, — 't was horrible !" And the poor boy's voice broke into a sob.

Bass observed him with astonishment, while the insurance agent forgot the injury to his case in manly compassion for the son who was forced by his conscience to make this distressing disclosure.

"Well, my boy," he said, with kindly encouragement, "tell us the rest."

"I could n't stay in the barn after he was gone. I wanted to know what he would do ; so I went out and followed him at a distance. He went straight

to Bass's tavern, as I was afraid he would. I had given him only a little money, so I thought I would n't stop him; but it was later than I supposed. The lights were all out, and he could n't get in. He tried the bar-room door, and then went off toward the old barn."

"Passing by the kitchen part of the hotel?" said the agent, with a curious smile, as he thought of the tailor.

"Yes, a little way off from it, — perhaps three or four rods. It was n't so dark but that I could see him go to the small barn-door and get in. He knew the fastenings. There was a slide you could move and reach your hand in and turn the bar, if you knew just how it worked."

"That was so me and my help would n't alluz be botherin' 'bout the key," spoke up the excited Bass. "The boy is right: his dad knew the barn; used to hide in 't one time from his creditors."

"I remembered his pipe," Phil resumed, "and I suppose I am to blame for not following him in and seeing that he did no mischief. But I thought it likely he might be out of matches and tobacco; I hoped he was. And it was Bass's barn; I did n't feel like setting foot inside the premises of a man who had used me so. I went far enough, though, to hear

a movement by the kitchen door, and see somebody hurry out. I thought it might be Bass."

The agent smiled again, remembering the tailor's ridiculous story.

"I waited awhile to see if anything happened," continued Phil, "then went off towards home. I walked slowly, and kept listening and looking back. By and by a light blazed up in a window, through some trees in the direction of the barn. I started towards it across the field, but soon met somebody coming towards me running and stumbling. I knew who it was, and when he fell in a little hollow, I hurried down to him. It was my father.

"'You've set the barn afire!' I said.

"'It's afire, that's a fact,' he said; 'but I don't know how I could have set it. I thought I was careful as usual.'

"'Careful as usual!' I said. 'Did you light your pipe?'

"'I did,' he said, 'and fell asleep with it in my mouth. When I woke up, everything was in a blaze. I had hardly time to get out.'

"He was frightened, and so was I," proceeded Phil. "I gave him all the money I had about me, and told him he must get out of the way as soon as possible. I was so excited I hardly knew what I was

about, but as somebody at the hotel had given the alarm, I hurried to the street and ran up and down, screaming fire."

"And what became of your father?" the agent inquired.

"I don't know," said Phil; "I have never seen him since."

This, then, was the secret which had preyed upon the boy's conscience and made his life miserable. His story was so manifestly true that Mr. Crosby, after putting to him a few questions, which were promptly answered, accepted it frankly, and begged Bass's pardon for having unjustly accused him.

"And I am to have my insurance?" cried Bass.

"Certainly, every cent that is justly your due," the agent replied. "We'll have the damages appraised at once."

"Glory!" said Bass, rolling from one leg to the other and floundering about in a clumsy bear-dance of exultation.

It had hardly got into his dull brain yet that he owed anything to Phil; nor was Phil at all anxious to receive from him any expressions of gratitude. The satisfaction of having at last done a duty which he had so long dreaded was enough for him.

"Folks'll be tickled, I tell ye! It'll make Sal screech!"

Bass was rushing out without his hat; he went back for it, and was crushing it on his head as he plunged again through the doorway, when he appeared suddenly to remember something else.

"Your dad's a scamp," he said, turning to Phil; "but you've done me a good turn, and you sha'n't be sorry for 't, as I promised Sal when she went to talk with ye."

He was going again, when the doctor stopped him.

"Is n't it about time, Bass, for you to give up that absurd claim on him, and destroy the writing his father gave you?"

Bass hesitated a moment, then pulled out his pocket-book and produced from it the paper, now worn and soiled, by which the wretched Farlow had pawned his son.

"Blast the thing!" he said, tearing it, and stamping on the pieces. "It has been more trouble, nuff sight, than it's been wuth. Phil done well by me, and we might have been good friends yit, if I had n't been too hard on him."

"How about burning his buckboard?" urged the doctor.

"I had nothing to do with that, as I've alluz said," Bass protested; "but I suppose I can guess

who done it, and soon as ever I git my insurance I'll give the boy a hundred dollars."

"You'd better give him an order on the insurance company for that amount now," the doctor shrewdly suggested. "The agent here will help you put it into shape."

Sol hesitated. The doctor insisted.

"Yes, I will," said Bass.

"To be sure, you've got a new buckboard," the doctor whispered aside to Phil, while Bass was getting pen and paper. "But the loss of the old one has given you a great deal of trouble, and caused more actual damage to your business than his hundred dollars will make good."

"All right!" said Phil, with rising spirits. "I'll take it, then I can pay my debts."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING signed the order which the agent wrote for him, Bass went off shouting his good news to every person he met. It spread rapidly, and actually reached Mrs. Shedrick's boarding-house before Phil did ; so that when he came around, after walking home with Dr. Mower, he was almost smothered with questions and congratulations.

Congratulations — yes ; that was what astonished him more than anything else. He had thought he could never look Clara and her mother in the face after confessing all the truth about his father. But he found that they suspected already who the vagabond was who inquired for him that evening when he carried his supper to the barn, and they now thought only of his noble conduct in sacrificing his own pride and revenge for the sake of justice even to his enemy.

As soon as Bass had got a settlement with the insurance company, which proved satisfactory to both parties, he made haste to discharge Lorson.

Then the whole history of the buckboard burning came out.

"You've used me a good deal better'n Bass has, though I've stood his friend and not yourn," the slab-sided one said to Phil, meeting him one evening on the street. "I'm goin' off, to-morrow, but I'm bound to tell ye all about that scrape fust. Bass did n't do it, and I did n't do it. He said he would be the fust one s'pected, and he must n't know nothin' about it. So he give me twenty dollars to git it done. I felt I must n't know nothin' about it nuther; so I jest passed the money on to Scoville and Krennidg, or at least a part on 't, and left them the job, which Bass's stories about you and your cuttin' under made 'em only too glad to do. Now don't you go to layin' it up ag'in me."

"I won't lay it up against you," Phil replied, "if you will go to Dr. Mower with me, and say again in his presence what you have said to me here."

"Of course I'll do that," said Lorson.

The next day he disappeared, and it was not long before both Scoville and Krennidg followed him, so strong was the feeling excited against them in the community by Lorson's revelations.

For the same reason, or others equally good, Bass himself concluded not to rebuild his hotel and

stables, but to sell his teams, and invest his money in a public house in Connecticut, where his wife's relations lived. The lively Sallie went with her parents, and Phil was to see her no more.

He did not grieve, although he regarded her with only kindly feelings now, remembering all her admirable qualities, and forgiving the faults which were attributable to her unfortunate temper and to the bad influences which had surrounded her all her life. When he heard afterwards that she had married a worthy man, he was sincerely glad.

"I've no doubt she will make him a good wife," he said, "if she keeps away from the old folks, and if she isn't too particular about the matter of his neckties."

Even towards Bass the boy's heart was strangely softened. This was not for anything Bass had done for Phil, but because Phil had himself been just and generous to Bass. If you would learn to forgive your enemy, go and do him a service.

Phil's father came back upon him two or three times ; and during the following summer, when Phil was running two buckboards and a "sunshade," — a vehicle so called from its cover and open sides, — he made a faithful attempt to reform the vagabond and set him to work. But Farlow could not

stand that long, especially since the tavern had disappeared and Thunder Brook had become a temperance village.

He was soon off again, and the next Phil heard of him was through a letter which he received in the winter from the authorities of a town on the Hudson, where Farlow, having nearly perished from exposure in a storm, had been received into a poor-house.

Phil hastened to him, and spent his earnings freely, like the dutiful son he was, in having him cared for to the last. Farlow's once fine constitution was broken; it never rallied, and within a month he had paid the one solemn debt which no man can evade.

The death of a father is to most children an irreparable loss and grief. It was a grief to Phil also; the more bitter because he had hoped all along that he might still reclaim the wretched man: the older he grew, the more earnestly he had resolved to devote the best energies of his life to that task. But how could he help one who would not help himself? Not even an angel from heaven might do that.

"What are you going at now?" said his good friend the doctor, when he returned and told his story. "Your teaming is prosperous, but it occupies you only about three months in the year."

"I know it," said Phil; "and even if it took the

whole of my time, I don't feel that it is just what I want to do all my life. I want to know more than I could ever learn in that business."

He might have added that he wished to become a noble and cultivated man for the sake of somebody else he meant to live for now that his father was gone. But he had not yet dared to breathe the thought even to that somebody else.

"That's good," said Dr. Mower, with his wise smile. "How would you like to come and study with me, and learn to be a doctor?"

"I've been thinking," replied Phil, "that is just what I should like to do."

THE END.

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